

# OUR INDIAN HERITAGE

BY

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BUDDHA EXPOUNDING THE LAW

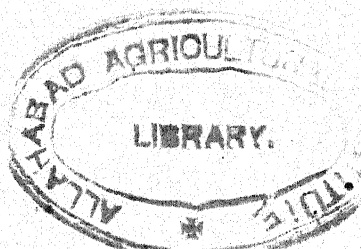


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## FOREWORD

In this book, which is meant especially for young readers, I have given a brief account of Indian civilization. In order to make the story vivid I have built it up round great kings, distinguished Indians, eminent women, and noble monuments. Yet, it should be understood, the story is not complete. There are many other persons and many other things that deserve to be written about. But, in the meantime, I hope that this book will fill readers with pride in our past and will serve as a stimulus to creative activity. It will give them an idea of the unity of India and of its great achievements in every field of human endeavour.



## CHAPTER ONE

### OUR CIVILIZATION

The story of India's civilization is indeed fascinating. Anyone who has studied it or seen any aspect of it has fallen under its spell. Indians are never tired of singing its praises, but foreigners are even more eloquent than the people of India. All agree that Indian civilization has done much for mankind, and that it has a message for the world even to-day.

A Chinese lady who was on a visit to India some years ago, said that she was much impressed with the beauty of the Taj Mahal at Agra; if she had seen nothing else but that in India, she would have felt that her visit had not been in vain. She spoke about what even China had learnt from India. India had taught the people of China love of peace and tranquillity. It had told them that they should live in a spirit of co-operation with the people of other countries; that is to say, that they should help other people and not subdue or destroy them. She also spoke of those Chinese scholars who had visited India thousands of years ago and established a contact between the two countries. She felt that India had always been a source of good not only to China but to the world at large.



Everyone admits that our civilization is very ancient. There are some pious people who believe that it is millions of years old. Scholars and historians without yielding to this claim of theirs have admitted that it is several thousand years old. It would not be helpful to compare this civilization of ours with the other civilizations of the world; but it cannot be denied that Indian civilization is older than the Egyptian or the Assyrian or the Chinese civilizations. If there was any doubt about it, it has been dispelled by the finds at Mohenjo-daro in the Larkana district in Sind. The very fact that it has endured all these years shows that it has something unique about it. Sir Mohammad Iqbal, an Indian poet of great fame, once wrote a stirring poem in which he said, "Egypt and Greece and Rome, where are they now? There is something which makes us (India) live up to this day."

It is really remarkable that this civilization of ours, in spite of its many years, is still vital. Sir S. Radhakrishnan once said in a speech that while the other civilizations had come and gone, our civilization and that of China were still there. They are, however, not mere curiosities but are still full of influence for good. Our civilization has been like a big tree which, though very old, has still green leaves, bears fruit, and gives shelter to many persons.

Our civilization is great in another way; it is

a happy combination of many things. Without losing its own character it has been taking on several elements from others. All these are therefore a part of it. Historians tell us that to the making of Indian civilization have gone many influences. The people who lived at Mohenjodaro contributed something to it. Then came the Aryans who laid the foundations of it and practically perfected it. The Dravidians also left their mark on it. Then the Persians, the Greeks, and the Mughals added something to it. The English brought with them their own culture, the traces of which we find everywhere in India to-day. Many influences, in this way, from within as well as without, have had an effect on our civilization, but it has retained its own characteristics.

Our civilization is mainly spiritual. When we say this we do not mean that we have neglected the things of this world, but that we have cared more for the things of the spirit than for material things. Rabindranath Tagore writing about the spirit of India has said that he loves India, because it is in this country that some very great truths have been found. Every Indian knows that God is truth, God is wisdom, God is infinite. It is from God that all peace comes; it is from Him that we have all goodness and it is He who makes for the unity of all things. Another great truth that we learn is that not only should we always work, but that we should also work, as it were,

in the sight of God. We should all desire peace, but this peace should be the result of our understanding of the unity of all things. We should know the spiritual meaning of life. We should pursue beauty, truth, and goodness.

Naturally we have done most useful work in the realm of philosophy. Dr. C. E. M. Joad has said that there are three things which distinguish our philosophy from the philosophy of other nations. In the first place, it is marked by continuity; that is to say, throughout the ages it has had only one end in view. All our Indian philosophers have sought to do only one thing. They have tried to know what this world is and what its purpose is. In the second place, our philosophy is marked by unanimity. Indian philosophers have approached this question from many different points of view, but they have all found almost the same answer. They have come to find that this world is not many but one. It is a unity, and this unity is the unity of the spirit. To a person who looks only at the surface, this world appears to be made up of so many things, but if he studies it carefully he finds that all these things are really not different from each other. In the third place, Indian philosophy has not been idle speculation. It has not dealt with the problems of life in the same spirit in which a student of mathematics might deal with mathematical problems merely to satisfy his intellect.

Indian philosophers do not try merely to prove things, they go further than this and ask us to believe in what they have proved; not only this, but they also ask us to practise what they have proved. This means that in India it is very difficult to distinguish between philosophy and religion — to know where philosophy ends and where religion begins. Indian philosophy shows. "a way of life as well as the way of believing". It is, therefore, extremely practical.

But it is not only in philosophy that Indians have accomplished much; in the realm of Art they have also achieved a great deal. Into their great works of art they have put their sense of beauty. These works are meant, however, not only to please our eye, but also to elevate our soul. One writer has gone so far as to say that these artists do not merely create beauty, but also glorify God. They produce such works as are beautiful in themselves, and also fill us with feelings of reverence and awe. Almost every work of Indian art has therefore two aspects — the one beautiful and the other spiritual.

We find that Indian art has persisted throughout the ages. Even at Mohenjo-daro in the Indus Valley some works of art have been discovered; figures of men with beards, figures of animals, temples, and monuments. Vedic Indians were not very fond of painting and sculpture, but they loved to produce such articles as are of use in the

household. Some of the utensils of that period which have come down to us are extremely good. Indian art attained to perfection in some directions during the period when Asoka ruled over India. Many examples of the art of this period have been discovered at Sarnath near Benares, at Muttra, at Taxila, and at several other places. The art of this period was mainly architectural, and we have, therefore, many monuments, pillars, and altars. The palace of Asoka in Pataliputra, of which Fa Hsien, the Chinese pilgrim, gave a glowing description, must have been a great work of art.

Many other remains of Indian art have been discovered at Sanchi in the Bhopal State, at Bharhut, and at Amaravati. Most of these are temples, monuments, and stupas. (A stupa is a kind of shrine in which is found a relic of the Buddha.) All these show a high degree of artistic skill. Indians were also very good at several other artistic pursuits, such as weaving and wood carving. They were, too, highly skilled in some kinds of metal work and some types of painting. Indian art, however, flourished greatly in the reign of Asoka who, it is said, built about eighty-four thousand shrines.

But we do not find the remains of ancient Indian art only at the places mentioned above. At Taxila, Benares, and Nalanda have also been discovered some relics of Indian art. Most of

these are made of stone. These buildings and sculptures also show the influence of the Greeks and the Romans. This means that in those days Indians were in touch with the inhabitants of Greece and Rome.

Indian sculpture flourished most under the Guptas. It was in those days that many fine images and statues were made. But they do not only please the eye, they have also an appeal for the heart and the soul, for every image expresses some noble idea. Many such images have come down to us.

• We should not, however, conclude that Indians could make only such things as are things of beauty. We should remember that they could make things of every-day use also. For instance, they knew how villages and towns should be planned. They knew also how houses should be designed and built, and how roads should be constructed. Indians, it should be remembered, could build drains, buildings, temples, and monasteries with great success. Many such buildings can be seen even to this day.

When the Muhammedans came to India, they brought with them their own ideas of art. These were happily combined with the ideas that were already there and the result was wonderful. The Mughals were especially interested in laying out gardens, and as a result we still have many gardens built by them in India. They also built



some magnificent buildings such as the Taj at Agra. Many other buildings at Fatehpur Sikri and Agra also show their interest in art.

All this should not lead us to think that Indians were not interested in painting. On the contrary, we should know that painting has always been practised with great success by Indians. It was, however, during the time when Buddha's influence was supreme in India that painting came to be highly developed. The finest examples of Indian painting can be seen even now in the temples of Ajanta. These show how Indian painters were always eager to express the truths of their religion by means of pictures. Even in the days of the Mughals painting continued to flourish, for many of the Mughal emperors were patrons of this art. There were also many Rajput painters who tried to paint such familiar scenes and sights as can be seen every day in India. Indian painters were also good at painting the portraits of living men and women. To-day India can still boast of some painters of great merit. Their work is appreciated not only in this country, but also abroad.

In the realm of literature also Indians attained to much eminence. We have, first of all, the Vedas in which very lofty ideas are expressed in memorable language. Then we have books which deal with medicine, music, archery, and architecture. Several books exist even now in which

astronomy, grammar, the rules of metre, and several other things are explained. Then there are books on law such as the famous book of Manu. One book was discovered in 1909 which explains how a kingdom should be governed. It is perhaps one of the best books in the whole of the world on politics. In addition to these, we have the glorious epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which have influenced Indians so much. The Buddhists gave to India many works of philosophy as well as stories and tales which convey moral ideas. It was, however, in the Gupta period that romances and dramas came to be written. Kalidasa, who is sometimes described as the Shakespeare of India, lived at that time, and some of his plays such as *Shakuntala* are famous all over the world. Several other poets and writers lived in that period whose works are read even to-day. Then, after many many years, the modern Indian languages came to be developed, and we find poets and saints like Chaitanya, Tulsidas, Tukaram, and Kabir writing beautiful religious poems.

Even in the days of the Mughal rule India continued to produce books of a high quality. Most of the Mughal emperors were lovers of art and literature and always helped writers and artists. In their day they particularly encouraged the writing of history and biography. The Mughal emperor Babar wrote his autobiography. In it



we find that the emperor was not only a conqueror but in a way a poet and a gifted writer. Akbar had several writers, poets, and musicians at his court, whom he always helped with money and praise. Two of these persons are most deservedly famous. One of them is Faizi who is popular as a poet even to-day. The other is Abul Fazl, who was a historian and wrote a life of Akbar as well as an account of his reign.

Even in the modern age we have many writers and poets who have produced well-known books. These writers are, however, of two kinds. There are some who write in English, but there are many more who write in their own mother tongues. Everyone knows the work of Rabindranath Tagore and Sir Mohammad Iqbal whose poems are read all over the world. Sarojini Naidu has written poems in English, which describe India's sights and scenes beautifully.

Indians, besides distinguishing themselves in cultural things, paid heed to the art of government also. Anyone acquainted with the history of India knows that from early times India had a system of government of its own. In the Vedic period we find assemblies that were elected by the people. There were panchayats also at that time which managed the affairs of the villages. In the Buddhist period there were several republics. Most of these were afterwards united into empires under Asoka and the Gupta mon-

archs. Later on, these empires were divided into several smaller empires and kingdoms. Then the Mughals established an empire of their own. Even then there were several independent kings in India. Later on, the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh and the Marathas under Sivaji founded empires of their own. Then came the English who established an empire in this country. But even to-day there are many Indian rulers, each governing his own State. Again, it should not be forgotten that Indians, even now in British India, enjoy a great measure of self-government.

• It would, however, be interesting to see what influence the West has had on the East, and what things we have taken over from the western nations. The westerners came to India as traders, but after some years they were able to acquire political power in India. Of all the western people who came to India the English proved the most clever and lucky, for they alone were able to establish a big empire in this country. This connection of the West with India has had many effects, some of which may be described as material. For instance, the English brought with them their own system of medicine and their own system of sanitation, and these have enabled Indians to fight diseases. They have opened a network of canals all over India thereby making the cultivation of the land much more easy. Railways too have been built, and these have con-

nected one part of India with another. But this does not mean that India had no system of medicine of its own or that it had no canals of its own before the English came. It had all these, but somehow they had fallen into decay. It should also be remembered that while developing these things the English were not entirely unselfish. It has been remarked by an English writer, "Their purposes were first to develop the country in their own interest and secondly to secure a good return on the capital which they had subscribed."

At the same time, under the influence of the West, India has improved her industry and trade. We have now many cotton mills, jute mills, steel mills, sugar mills, and factories of other kinds. We manufacture iron and steel, paper and matches, and several other things, and we are making increasingly great use of electricity. These factories have added to the wealth of some people and have provided employment to many, but even then we cannot say that their influence has been wholly good. In spite of everything, the average income of an Indian is very low, and he is generally very poor. He is a prey to many diseases which go with poverty, and the death rate amongst Indians is also quite high.

If these are the results of the contact of the West with the East on the material side, the results on the cultural side have also been far-

reaching. In the first place, there is a growing desire for developing the ancient Indian literature and culture. It is for this reason that many attempts are made to study the poetry and drama and philosophy of India. The people of India are also very keen on developing the modern Indian languages. Some of them, Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali, are already very well developed, and it has been said about at least one of them, Bengali, that it is as good as any modern European language as a vehicle of expression.

All this makes the study of Indian culture a delightful thing. Yet we should not study this book in the same spirit in which we read a complete story, for Indian culture is not only of the past but also of the present and of the future. It is still growing and developing. It is being changed and modified. All the elements — economic, political, moral, and mental — that go to make up a high-grade civilization are present in abundance in India, for her literature to-day is as noble as that of any country, and the development of science is taking place apace. While our civilization has learnt a great deal from other civilizations, and especially from the civilization of the West, it has also taught them valuable lessons. It is as vigorous to-day as it was many years ago. In the domain of the spirit, in spite of so many superstitions, it is still very active. Politically, too, we are no longer divided, for we have one strong



impulse towards freedom. Economically, too, our country is developing very fast. Its industry and its agriculture are being improved, and it may well be that after some time even in these fields we may be a great nation in the world. But the soul of Indian culture is to be found not in these things so much as in something else — “It is,” as one writer has put it, “the tolerance and gentleness of the mind, the contentment of the soul and the love of all living things that it has to teach to others.”

It is intended to give in this book a brief account of Indian civilization and this has been done by referring to great monarchs, eminent Indians, noble monuments, and remarkable women. It is a great and noble story of what has been achieved, what is being achieved, and what will be achieved.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

Harappa is to be found in the district of Montgomery in the Punjab, and is believed to be a very ancient city. Every now and then, seals which are rather curious, are found there. Some archæologists began to study these seals, and came to the conclusion that they must have been made several thousand years ago. In fact, they thought that these pointed to a very ancient civilization, which must have been older than any known in history. With this idea in view, some archæologists set about discovering the traces of that civilization. One of them came upon a Buddhist stupa and monastery which seemed to have been built in the early centuries of the Christian era. It was found that these buildings were made of burnt brick such as was nowhere used at that time. It was believed that these bricks were made about twenty-six hundred years ago. This was a very startling discovery.

The first person to come upon that Buddhist stupa and monastery was a Bengali archæologist, but later on he was joined by several others. Sir John Marshall, who was the Director of

Archæology in India, and some others got very much interested in this work. After much investigation they came to the conclusion that there existed a culture in India which was much older than what is described by historians as the Aryan culture. They were driven to this conclusion because they found the remains of this culture in northern Baluchistan and in Rupar near the Simla Hills. The traces of this civilization, known as the Indus Valley Civilization, were also found to the south and east of Harappa. From these they gathered that its extent was much larger than that of the civilization of Egypt.

It should, however, be remembered that the material for the study of this civilization was found mainly at Mohenjo-daro. The excavations went on for many years, several feet below the surface, and many useful things such as pottery, seals, and stone implements were found. Mohenjo-daro in Sindhi means the "place of the dead", and consists of one very big mound, which is about thirteen hundred yards long and about six hundred and seventy yards wide, and several smaller mounds. These mounds are of a light red tint because they are made of burnt brick. All these show that they must have been built about two thousand five hundred and fifty years before the Christian era. That mounds like these should have been built so many years ago shows that the builders must have been people of great

culture. They must have lived peacefully. They must have led very decent and comfortable lives. It cannot be denied that they traded, worshipped, and took pride in what they did. In fact, it is believed that Mohenjo-daro was a busy trading city, and the buildings that have been discovered there look like those in a big market-place. The stalls are arranged in rows. A big store-house was discovered at Harappa also.

From the buildings, the seals, the stone implements, and some other things that have been found there, scholars have been able to give a picture of the civilization as it existed at one time. The very first thing that they have noticed is that the cities of the Indus Valley did not grow up in a haphazard manner, but were built according to some design. For instance, they have found that the streets were straight and crossed one another at right angles. From this it is clear that the inhabitants of the Indus Valley understood town planning. It was for this reason that it was strictly forbidden to let buildings encroach upon the streets. But there were not only main streets in the city, there were also lanes and minor streets.

The houses also show that the people knew a great deal about the art of building. Bricks, burnt as well as unburnt, were freely used in building the houses, and were usually well shaped. These were of all sizes; the bigger ones were used for covering the drains, and some other kinds

were made use of in building wells and arches. In pavements mud mortar was generally used to keep the bricks together, but sometimes lime mortar was used. Most of the houses were plain, but ornamental bricks and carved wood were sometimes used.

The edifice that has been discovered at Harappa has two rows of halls which are built almost in similar fashion, and which have very good floors. In addition to these halls, some bathrooms have been found. A large public bath, 39 feet by 20 feet, has been found. This bath is water-tight, has steps which lead down to the water of the river, and is divided into small compartments for the bathers. This bath could be filled with water and emptied at will. Near the bathroom has been discovered a big building, more than two hundred feet long and one hundred feet wide, which, it is believed, may have been the palace in which the king lived.

These people had a religion of their own, and it is believed that they worshipped the great Mother Goddess. So many clay images of this goddess have been discovered that it is but natural to believe that she was looked upon as the most venerable deity. It was she who protected from all kinds of harm, and it was she who granted prayers. The people worshipped some male gods also, and most of them had horns like those of a goat or a bull. It is believed that these people

worshipped Shiva, for some seals have been found on which this god is depicted. Some trees were looked upon as sacred. The peepal tree and the neem tree are found on several seals. Some reptiles such as the crocodile and the snake were dreaded and worshipped. Some seals have on them something like the swastika or the Greek cross which shows that these people worshipped these symbols.

These people had burial rites of their own. Since no cemetery has been found at Mohenjodaro, it is believed that the people burnt their dead. A big burial-place was, however, found at Harappa, which means that sometimes the dead were buried. It is believed that the people always preserved the ashes of the dead in vessels. Sometimes the bones of the dead were collected, and were deposited in jars which were buried.

It may be interesting to know what kind of clothes and ornaments these people wore. It is thought that the women wore only a short skirt. But this skirt was not always plain; sometimes it was ornamented. They had some sort of head-dress, wore a necklace round their necks, and had bangles on their arms. The men wore a robe and something resembling a dhoti. Perhaps most of them went barefooted. Most of these clothes were made of linen, though wool, also, must have been used. The women knew how to dress their hair and the men were fond of



trimming their beards.

The people had ornaments of their own such as necklaces, beads, and fillets. These were made of gold, silver, copper, and bronze. The women wore metal combs on the tops of their heads and were fond of ear-rings, nose ornaments, finger rings, bangles, bracelets, and necklets.

The people of the Indus Valley knew the use of several metals, and it is reasonable to infer that they had copper, bronze, and tin in abundance. Most of the vessels that have been discovered are made of copper or bronze, and from these we can gather that the people knew how to make use of these metals. They made jars, battle-axes, and saws of them and put them to several uses. It is believed that they could make swords, spear blades, daggers, arrow-heads, and fish hooks also. They made use of razors, and four kinds of razor have been found. They knew how to cast bronze for figures, big and small. From all this we can gather that there were many smiths who could work in these metals, and that they were highly skilled too. These people also put stones to various uses. For example, they made weapons of stone and used stone weights.

These people were artistic, as is clear from the many kinds of pottery that have been found. For the making of this they used clay which they obtained from the nearby river. The potter's craft, therefore, was much developed at that

time, and the potter turned out several kinds of things, plain as well as decorated. It is believed that the men potters made these articles on the wheel while the women finished, painted, and decorated them. These articles were mostly painted with a kind of red ochre, and most of them had different kinds of pattern on them. Sometimes the patterns consisted of circles and sometimes of trees, animals, and birds. People who are competent to judge these things say that the pottery of the Indus Valley was not made by craftsmen who were merely learning this kind of art; it seems to have been done by highly skilled people who had had much practice. Although many kinds of pottery have been found, yet jars seem to have been a kind of speciality. In the museum at Mohenjo-daro are so many different types of jars that one can only marvel at the artistic skill of the people who made them.

The people of the Indus Valley were primarily agriculturists and grew cotton, wheat, barley, melons, and dates. They were traders and traded on land as well as on the sea. They made boats and vessels which could carry their goods from one place to another.

Nor were these people averse to the amusements of life. They were fond of making toys such as small models of bulls, carts, and birds, and it is believed that even the children knew how to make these toys. They were fond of

playing dice and were good at playing marbles. They were interested in dancing, which was perhaps a part of their religious ceremonies. This dancing generally went with music and they had several kinds of drums as well as harps and lyres. It is almost certain that these people liked hunting and fishing. They hunted as much for sport as for adding variety to their meals.

The remains of this civilization have been discovered at many places such as Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. Its extent can therefore be known from the fact that there is a distance of about four hundred miles between these two cities. Even at Hyderabad which is more than one hundred miles to the south of Mohenjo-daro, in Baluchistan, at Makran which is about one hundred and fifty miles away, and at Rupar which is at the foot of the Simla Hills, such evidences have been found as link them up with the other centres of the Indus Valley Civilization. It has also been found that the people who built up this civilization were akin to the Sumerians, for both peoples had similar kinds of pottery, beads, and tools.

This civilization came to an end, however. There are some who think that these people were decimated by some epidemic, but there are others who believe that they were conquered and destroyed by some other race. Perhaps the floods in the river Indus were responsible for the gradual disappearance of this civilization.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE ARYAN CULTURE

After what has been described as the pre-historic civilization or the Indus Valley Civilization, we come to the Vedic culture or the Aryan culture. It is not, however, possible to define this Aryan culture exactly. We find some glimpses of it in the Vedas and some hints of it in the Upanishads. The *Ramayana*, one of the most famous epics of India, throws some light on it and the *Mahabharata* also gives a picture of it. The *Bhagwad Gita*, which is a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, is valuable for this purpose, and so are the Smritis and the Puranas. All these sacred books help us to reconstruct the Aryan culture. This does not, however, mean that they all tell the same tale, but one thing is clear — that from them we can find the broad features of this culture.

From these books we learn many things about the Aryans. First of all, we learn about their religion, but even here there is some difference of opinion. There are some who believe that the Aryans worshipped many gods, and there are others who think that they worshipped only one God.

It is, however, enough for us to know that the one and true God of the Aryans created this world and sustains it. It is He who makes people happy and it is only He who protects them against all harm. On the whole He is very kind, and the friend of man. The Aryans believed that there could be direct communication between God and man and that God could be propitiated through sacrifices, rituals, prayers, and the chanting of mantras.

These Aryans were in general a happy people and did not look upon this world as a place of woe and this life as something evil. They wanted to live a hundred years, enjoying the company of their sons and grandsons, and possessing wealth in the form of gold and cattle. They believed that the soul is immortal and thought that man is born again and again. These people had high moral standards. They believed in goodness, in truth, in forbearance, and in kindness. They enjoyed also a high degree of material comfort. It has been said, "There was plenty and luxury. Gold, ornaments, and fine robes were in plenty. Music, dancing, and other arts had attained a high degree of perfection."

Every man's life was divided into four stages, namely: Brahmacharyya, the student life; Garhasthya, the householder's life; Banprastha, the life of a recluse in the forest; and Sannyasa, the life of a mendicant or of one who has given up

everything. Thus we find that the Aryans evolved a high state of society and civilization.

They kept many kinds of domestic animals and were mostly an agricultural people. They knew how to build boats and chariots and make use of precious metals and herbs. There was much intellectual activity amongst them and this laid the foundations of many kinds of knowledge.

They were, moreover, religious people and had the noblest kind of religious poetry. If we want to see examples of this we should read the hymns of the Vedas and the lofty poetic prose of the Brahmanas. The Puranas show the power of their authors' imagination and the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are grand in every sense of the word. These two epics describe very noble characters and teach lessons which are good for mankind all over the world.

The Aryans produced non-religious literature also. Of this the drama is the most famous, and of the dramatists the two most celebrated are Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti. Both these poets wrote poetry which can soften and ennoble the human heart. Their plays and poems are full of tender feelings and noble sentiments. It is, however, a pity that while the Aryans excelled in producing that kind of literature which calls imagination into play, they did not produce many books of history worth the name. Perhaps *Rajatarangini* of Kash-

mir and the *Rasamala* of Gujrat are the two historical works which best show the historical genius of the Aryans, otherwise most of their history has been reconstructed with the help of coins and inscriptions.

The writing of history did not come naturally to the Aryans, nor did the writing of biography. The Buddhists and the Jains wrote biographies of their saints, but these are not always reliable because they are such an odd mixture of fact and fiction. Bana wrote a biography of Harsha which is a standard work.

The Aryans, however, showed a great genius for developing languages. Of these Sanskrit and Pali are the most well known. It is from the Prakrit that the various modern languages of India have developed. Nor did they neglect the study of grammar and philology. They studied minutely how words should be pronounced, how they should be combined, how they are derived, and how they should be used in verse. In these two fields two scholars, Panini and Yaska, did the most notable work which has not been improved upon to this day. They are in a way models for writers of grammar all over the world.

The Aryans also produced works on astronomy and law and ritual. They described all kinds of ceremonies and rituals, how they should be performed, and what blessings would accrue from them. Some of these ceremonies are meant for



householders, but there are others which deal with national sacrifices. Some of these writers describe also how society can be kept together and how political institutions can be worked. In other words, these writers have given directions for every kind of human action and behaviour in individual, domestic, or national life.

The most lasting work of the Aryans was done in the field of philosophy. The Vedas describe very fully how this world came to be created, what the soul is, what the nature of God is, and what men should strive for. We find similar ideas in the Upanishads. Then there came a time when six different schools of philosophy came into being in India. All these show subtlety of the intellect and profundity of thought. For a time it was believed that these systems gave different explanations of the problems of the universe, but now it is believed that there is much room for agreement amongst them.

In the realm of science too the Aryans did lasting work. In the field of mathematics they invented the decimal system of notation. They knew the Rule of Three and could extract square and cube roots. They knew what are now called Algebra, Geometry, and Trigonometry. They knew that the earth is round and that it has the power of attracting things to it. They made considerable progress in medical science also. They knew that herbs could be used for effecting cures



and that mineral substances such as mercury and gold could be used for medicinal purposes. They were skilled in surgery and invented instruments for performing operations. They were familiar not only with the diseases of men but also with those of animals. It was Asoka who first of all established hospitals for the treatment of animals, and there are several works extant which deal with the diseases common to horses and elephants.

In the realm of the fine arts the Aryans did much worthy work. They invented as many as sixty-four fine arts such as dancing, singing, carpentry, painting, portrait painting, architecture in stone and bricks, engraving on gold and stone, and many others. Of these arts architecture is the most ancient, and we have even to-day many noble examples of it, such as cave temples and temples made of stone or brick. Along with architecture the art of sculpture was also encouraged, and many of their stone temples and images of gods still survive.

So much for the arts and sciences in India, but one might ask, "What about the social organization?" At the head of the social and political organization in ancient India stood the Brahmin. He was all in all and even the king bowed his head in reverence before him. It was he who gave the laws to the people, and it was he who interpreted those laws. But he was not

merely the chief legislator, he was also the chief judge. He was also the chief priest. He told people what their religious duties were and how they could perform them adequately. In addition to these things, he was the chief educator. The education of all the people in India was entrusted to his care. Yet in spite of the fact that he was such a mighty person, he drew no salary. His chief consideration was service and not wealth. He never cared to possess lands or to trade; his only care was to serve people. This he did by means of learning unselfishness and acquiring strength of character. But he did not attain to this position of eminence for nothing. Behind it lay many years of hard training. In the first place, he devoted himself to the acquisition of knowledge, but knowledge not only of a worldly kind but also of a spiritual character. He learned to perform sacrifices and acquired the habit of concentrating his mind on difficult problems. He trained his intellect and also his character. He gave himself up entirely to the matters of the intellect and the soul. He qualified himself as a teacher in the best sense of the word. It was no wonder that all, kings as well as pariahs, sat at his feet to learn from him.

But he did not give instruction merely in those things which benefit people individually. He told them also how to organize society. This he did by dividing the community into a number

of castes. These castes, to begin with, were based on professions and not on birth. Each caste had its own rules of conduct and its own ways of enforcing those rules. But each caste group had links with the other groups, and over them all stood the Brahmins and their kings. Though, later on, this caste system became in some ways an influence for evil, yet for some centuries it proved to be very beneficent. It allotted to each person a number of duties, by performing which he could have a sense of being useful to the community. The Brahmins looked after the spiritual needs of the people. They learned and taught and helped the people in performing sacrifices. The Kshatriyas became warriors and developed the art of fighting. The Vaishyas added to the wealth of the country and were the patrons of the fine arts. There were some who did the same kind of work as clerks do to-day. There were others who worked with their hands. There was also a class whose duty was to guard the villages and towns in India.

Though big towns were not unknown in India in those days, yet the centre of life was to be found in the villages. Each village was so organized as to have everything sufficient for its needs. In it dwelt farmers and traders, labourers and clerks, artisans and physicians, priests and policemen. In short, it could satisfy all its needs locally. The village was not only a social unit, but also an

administrative unit. It had its own local officers and headman, its own panchayats and court of justice. It was further linked up with other villages. Groups of villages were placed under officers who derived their authority from the king. The religious life of the Aryans in the villages was also attended to by the Brahmins. This took the form of ceremonies and sacrifices. Most of these were conducted for the benefit of individuals, but sometimes there were also national sacrifices.

Side by side with this the Brahmins looked after the education of the people. This education was secular as well as religious, that is to say, they taught those subjects which enabled people to learn divine wisdom as well as the management of the affairs of this world. Yet all this education was self-supporting. The teachers and the students were maintained by the community, though sometimes kings gave grants of land to learned Brahmins. Though the house of every Brahmin was a kind of school, yet there were some educational institutions which were like the universities of to-day. Such educational institutions were found at Navadvip, Benares, Poona, and Nalanda. To these centres of learning flocked students from all parts of India.

This is a bird's-eye view of the Aryan or Hindu civilization. It is natural to ask what good this civilization has done to India in general

and mankind in particular. To this question an answer has been given by Mrs. Annie Besant. She says that the message of Aryan or Hindu culture can be summed up in one word Dharma, which can be liberally translated as Duty. This idea is derived from the religion of the Aryans and means that everyone is born in this world to fulfil certain obligations. He is to do his duties knowing full well that he lives for all and is working towards a common goal. Hence, Mrs. Besant says, "The Ideal of the Hindu was the Man Dutiful, the man who recognized all his obligations and lived as part of a greater whole, not as an independent being". Naturally we find that Hinduism enjoins upon us duties at all stages of life. When we are students we are to study, to cultivate self-control, to practise simplicity, and to learn to serve others. A householder must perform the five sacrifices. He should perform the Havan, study every day the Vedas or some sacred book, do his duty by his ancestors or parents, should be hospitable to strangers and kind to beggars, and should feed and protect animals and birds. Nor were women kept out of this scheme. Mrs. Besant goes on to say: "The women of those older days were not only the petted delights of their husbands, the bright radiance of their homes, they were counsellors, advisers, in the hour of difficulty and of peril. Draupadi advises with Yudhishtira; Sita gives to Rama-

chandra prudent timely counsel; Gandhari comes into the open Sabha to remonstrate with Duryodhana when all others have failed to persuade and to restrain. In the ancient days there was no zenana, no imprisonment of the woman in the house. She was not confined within four walls as now, but shared her husband's wider interests, his larger life, and so was fitted to be the mother of noble sons, fitted to be their counsellor in difficulty, their comprehending refuge in distress."

- This shows that the Hindus had high ideals of marriage and believed that after marriage the lives of husband and wife become one and inseparable. Similarly the Hindus had their own idea of kingship and government, which aimed at the protection and happiness of everyone. In the same way the Hindu religious ideal expressed itself, according to Mrs. Besant, along the three paths, Wisdom, Will, and Activity. The first duty of a Hindu was to learn to know as much of philosophy and science as possible. His second duty was to train his will and to control his desires. His third duty was to perform sacrifices and ceremonies and to do his work as a member of society. The message of Aryan culture or Hindu culture is therefore the performance of one's duties.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BUDDHA

In the sixth century before Christ a great change came over India. To be sure this change did not come about all of a sudden; dissatisfaction had been rife for about five hundred years and the people of India wanted a change. It, however, took time before it was effected.

As you know, the history of ancient India has been divided into several periods. First of all, we have the Vedic period when the Aryans settled in India. Then we have the Epic period when the Upanishads were written. This was succeeded by another period in which the great epics of India were written, the sciences of geometry and grammar were developed, systems of philosophy were evolved, and civil and criminal laws were codified. It was also during this period that the whole of north India came under the rule of a great emperor. But it was also during this period that the people felt a great deal of dissatisfaction with the religion as it was practised in those days. To tell the truth, the spirit of this religion had vanished and only the letter had been left. The people did not practise the religion

as it was taught in the holy books, but resorted to ceremonies and rites. They thought that by doing so they would earn religious merit. Nor did they perform these ceremonies themselves; on the contrary, they hired the services of priests for this purpose. It was, therefore, no wonder that religion came to be replaced by ceremonies. But it was not only in the sphere of religion that this change for the worse came to be noticed. In the social field also similar tendencies were at work. As time passed, the caste system became more and more rigid and the Brahmins began to enjoy more and more privileges. In this state of affairs all the members of the community began to suffer, but the people who suffered most were the Sudras. They were despised by all.

At such a time Buddha was born. He had a mind which enquired into the true nature of everything, and he had a heart which was full of sympathy for everyone. He was a learned man, but he knew that mere learning was not enough. Nor did he have much faith in ceremonials and rites. He believed that the penances which ascetics practised in forests were meaningless. More than this, he felt that the distinction between the Brahmins and the Sudras was not natural. He therefore gave people his own message. It was, however, no new message. He himself said that he was preaching the ancient religion of the Aryans in its purest form. He taught people the value of



purity. He asked them to be full of love for everyone. He did not recognize the caste distinctions and treated alike the high and the low. He did not believe in ceremonies but in a pure, gentle, and noble life. It was no wonder that his noble character, his simple but noble principles, and his noble conduct attracted the people.

Gautama Buddha was born about 568 B.C. in a small kingdom which lay on the borders of Nepal. His father, Suddhodana, was the chief of the Sakyas and ruled over this kingdom with its capital at Kapilavastu. He had two wives but neither of them gave him an heir to his kingdom for many years. At last the elder Queen gave birth to Siddhartha in a garden while she was on her way to her father's house. It should be remembered that Siddhartha was his real name and Gautama his family name. He came afterwards to be known as Buddha which means "the enlightened". We do not know much about his early life except that he was married to Yasodhara, one of his cousins, when he was about eighteen years old. It is said that as a boy at school he did not take part in those manly exercises in which princes are usually interested. At this the people complained to his father because they felt that a weak prince would not make a good ruler. A day was therefore fixed on which he was to show his skill. Strange to say, he displayed his skill and strength to the satisfaction of everyone and put every young man

of his age to shame.

His heart was not, however, in his kingdom or in the kind of life that was led at court. He was by nature thoughtful and reflective, and soon came to realize that a life of pleasure was nothing. He felt that even the life of a householder was full of troubles, but that the life of a monk was the best of all. A monk alone could be free from sins and could be above the desire for wealth and position and power. He went on revolving such thoughts in his mind for some time. Then he came upon an old beggar, a sick man, a dead body, and a noble hermit. These made him realize still more deeply the sorrows of old age, the illness to which man is heir, and death which is the lot of all. By contrast he came to feel that the life of a hermit was the best because by leading such a life one rose above the weakness of old age, the ills of the body, and the fear of death. He therefore made up his mind to leave his home. At this very time a son was born to him. But even this did not deter him from his resolve. So one night he left his home in company with his faithful servant. He then became a homeless ascetic.

After leaving his home, Gautama went to Rajagraha, the capital of Bimbisara, king of Magadha. There he read with some Brahmins, but his studies did not bring him any peace of mind. Then he went to the jungles of Uruvela.

and practised penances there for six years, but even these did not give him any happiness. So weakened was he by these penances that one day he fell down exhausted. At last, under the famous Bo-tree, true knowledge came to him. He felt that he could save himself and the world only if he led a holy life and practised love towards everyone. With this knowledge he went to Benares where he gathered many disciples around him. There in the Deer Park he explained to the assembled people his doctrine of the Middle Way. He said to the people that there are some men in this world who lead a life of enjoyment, and live to please themselves and gratify their senses. Such people lead a very low life. There are others who practise penances and mortify the flesh, but even this kind of life is not very profitable. There is, however, the Middle Path which puts an end to sufferings and brings peace of mind. It is along this path that people should walk. He also told them how the world is full of suffering, how this suffering comes into being, and how it can be destroyed. This, according to him, can be done only if one has correct beliefs and right aims, does the right kind of things, thinks rightly, fixes his mind upon the right objects, and aspires after tranquillity. Thus Buddha told people that they themselves could make their lives. He told them that they would reap as they sowed. If they sowed evil they would be punished, and if

they did good they would have a higher life. He therefore asked them to practise truthfulness, charity, and purity and to control their passions. He insisted that every man should practise non-injury to living creatures. This meant that no one should try to hurt anybody by means of his actions, speech, or thoughts. These noble thoughts of his inspired many people, and a large number of disciples gathered together. He sent them in different directions and to different places so that they should preach this religion to the people. Nor did he himself remain idle; he too wandered from place to place and converted learned Brahmins, kings, and humble people. During his travels he went to his native place and there converted his son and wife. It is said that his wife became one of the first Buddhist nuns. In this way he went on preaching his religion for forty-five years till he died at the age of eighty.

We have already learned what Buddha taught. During his lifetime as well as afterwards Buddhism was preached by two kinds of persons. There were some who lived with their families and yet took delight in preaching Buddhism; there were others who gave up the world and took to preaching the religion. All these preachers belonged to a community called the "Sangh", which had its own rules which were very strictly enforced. Again, Buddhism had some women preachers also, who were called nuns. At the same time,

Buddha gave equal rights to all the members of the church, whether they came of a high caste or a low caste; whether they belonged to a rich class or came of poor classes. Buddha also made the language of the common people the medium of his discourses, with the result that his message came to be understood by the people very easily.

The loftiness of Buddha's character, the nobility of his teaching, the power of organization shown by him, the zeal of his preachers, the easy medium of their discourses; all these things made for the rapid spread of Buddhism. It was, therefore, no wonder that Buddhism spread in many countries of the world such as Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan, Burma, Ceylon, and Siam. To-day, one-third of the people of the world are Buddhists.

Nor should it be forgotten that the message of Buddha is as helpful to-day as it was when Buddha himself preached. In some ways it is needed more to-day than it ever was before. The world is to-day full of the spirit of strife. Man is not at peace with himself or with his neighbours. Everywhere men are afraid of each other. They do not look upon each other as friends, but as enemies. This is true not only of men of different countries but also of men who belong to the same country. For all these difficulties of ours, Buddha offers the best solution. In the first place, Buddha asks us to be friendly with one another. We should not

have any kind of hate in us. We should have no feelings of ill-will towards anyone. This friendliness we should practise not only towards human beings but even towards all living creatures. Thus Buddha utters over again the simple, noble, Vedic precept, "Let us look upon each other with the eyes of friends." Buddha in this manner becomes the prophet of love and non-violence. He wants us not to injure anyone and not to sit in judgment upon the weaknesses of others. If we study all the great religions of the world carefully, we find that all of them lay stress on the same thing. They all ask us to be good, to love one another, and to serve one another. These very truths were preached by Buddha. He asked people to refrain from killing, from stealing, from unchastity, from lying, and from intoxicants. Christ gave similar precepts for the guidance of man. So did the Prophet Muhammad.

Even in our own day Mahatma Gandhi is giving the same message. Does he not ask people to love one another, not to injure anybody, to speak the truth, and to do away with untouchability? He asks the different people of India to live together peacefully. He wants all the people in this world to be friends with one another. It is for this reason that many persons look upon him not only as a great saint and reformer, but also as a great spiritual leader. He, like Buddha, wants people to practise noble living and noble thinking.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ASOKA

It was Chandra Gupta who overthrew the Nanda dynasty and made himself master of the whole of northern India. The dynasty which he founded came to be known as the Maurya dynasty. Chandra Gupta made a great emperor, and his capital was Pataliputra, a magnificent city with sixty-four gates and five hundred and seventy towers. He had a large army which was well disciplined and consisted of lakhs of foot soldiers. He had also at his disposal horses, elephants, and chariots, and all these made him dreaded by the other kings of India. But he was not merely a military genius, he was equally good as an administrator. He had several departments, each of which looked after some branch of administration. He built up roads and waterways and canals. He had special officers to collect the land revenue and other kinds of taxes. He kept a record of the births and deaths in his kingdom and employed news writers, who told him all about the important happenings in his kingdom. He thus proved to be a very strong, efficient, and good ruler. He had friendly relations with the Greeks, and a

Greek ambassador, Megasthenes, dwelt at his court. This ambassador kept a kind of diary from which we can learn much about India of that time and about the reign of Chandra Gupta.

The most important sovereign of the Maurya dynasty was Asoka, who succeeded to the throne in 273 B.C. He, however, did not come to the throne as an inexperienced youth. He already had some experience as a ruler, for he had acted as governor first of the north-west province and later on of western India. At the capitals of both the provinces, Takshasila and Ujjain, he had seen some glories of Aryan culture, for both these places were centres of learning. It is therefore no wonder that even as a young man he acquired some love of Aryan philosophy. For many years, however, his chief interest was not philosophy but war. It is said that even his accession to the throne was not very peaceful. His coronation was delayed for four years because of some troubles in the kingdom. At last peace was established because the emperor lopped off the tallest trees in the royal garden; that is to say, he put an end to the lives of all those princes who were his rivals.

For an account of the reign of Asoka we get much information from his edicts or proclamations which were inscribed on stone pillars or on rocks. It is not known how many edicts he issued, but we know that thirty-four have been discovered. These give information of various



kinds. Some of them tell us about the visits he paid to the sacred places of Buddhism, while others contain his orders to the State officials, in which he clearly sets forth their duties as well as the duties of his subjects.

From these records we learn that in the ninth year of his reign he undertook the conquest of Kalinga or the countries which lay near the Bay of Bengal. He conquered this kingdom, but not without much cruelty and bloodshed. It is said that in the battles one hundred thousand people were killed, one hundred and fifty thousand were taken captive, and a large number of peaceful inhabitants died. This war was the last which Asoka ever fought, for it brought home to his mind what a bloody business war is. The thought that so many innocent people had been massacred sent horror into his heart and he repented that he had ever done a thing like this. After this he did not think of conquering others but tried to conquer himself. In this resolve of his he was strengthened by a Buddhist monk named Upagupta. It was in the company of this monk that he went on his pilgrimages to the holy places of Buddhism. After some time he was so struck with the beauty of Buddhism that he became a member of the Buddhist Sangha.

Then he fixed his mind more and more upon acts of piety. He issued edicts asking people to respect ascetics, Brahmins, and elders. He for-

bade the slaughter of animals and decreed that no meat should be cooked in the royal kitchen. He asked the officials to plant trees and fruit gardens, to build rest-houses, to have wells dug along the public roads, and to open hospitals for men as well as animals. He further decreed that he would be available at all times of day and night to listen to the appeals and complaints of the people. He came to look upon his subjects as his children and asked his officials to treat them with the utmost courtesy. He asked his subjects also to practise the Dharma, the Law of Good Living. Children were to obey their parents and students their teachers, and truth was to be spoken at all costs. He further said that all saints must be respected and that no one should think lightly or contemptuously of the faith of others. To see that the Dharma was practised faithfully by his subjects, he appointed special officers.

But Asoka did not want the Dharma to spread only in his own kingdom; he wanted the people of other countries also to know the Good Law. So he sent medical missions to Ceylon and southern India. He sent missionaries of the faith to Syria, Egypt, and Macedonia. He sent his own brother Mahendra and his sister to Ceylon. Thus his sole passion in life became the spread of the Dharma. Nor did his efforts fail to bear fruit. He himself recorded, "Now the Dharma was growing and was increased by obedience to father and

mother, obedience to teachers, reverence to the aged and kindly treatment of Brahmins and ascetics, of the poor and wretched, yea even of slaves and servants." In addition to preaching the Dharma, Asoka undertook state pilgrimages to the holy places of Buddhism. Thus he visited the Lumbini Garden where Buddha was born, Kapilvastu, the Bodhi-tree at Gaya, Sarnath, Saravasti, and Kusinagar. He reigned for thirty-eight years and died in 226 B.C. He was then given a rank next to that of Buddha.

It is clear that Asoka had before him not the ideal of Vijaya but the ideal of Dharma Vijaya. In other words, he did not want to add to his territories but to spread his religion. He therefore bent all his energies towards the attainment of this object. He cared more for peace and spiritual progress than for political or military or imperial grandeur. This was, of course, a new ideal of kingship, quite different from that set forth in the epics. It is true that this made the Indians more spiritual but it is also true that it made them politically weak. Yet this ideal is not to be taken lightly — it has a great value for the world of to-day, when so many great nations are keen on military conquest and want to add to their territories. The result is that there are jealousies among nations and each nation is afraid of the others. Many people think that the world is like an armed camp where the countries are

*Monarka byam*

ASOKA

*Ashok*

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ready to fight each other at a moment's notice. It would be very noble if all the countries of the world could adopt the ideal of Asoka. Instead of conquering the nations they should try to civilize them. Instead of sending soldiers to other countries, they should send missionaries of peace. If this were done, the world would be a much happier place. Nor is this difficult to do. Shri Ramkrishna Paramahansa, one of the noblest saints in Bengal in the nineteenth century, restated this ideal for the guidance of the men of to-day. He appealed to the people of the world to believe in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

In other directions, also, Asoka made his influence felt. He was a great builder. In the monuments that he erected we find the best testimony to his work. A historian has said that he built five kinds of monuments; stone pillars, topes, rails of fine workmanship, churches, and monasteries. Some of these exist even to-day, such as the tope at Sanchi, the lion pillars at Sarnath, and the polished caves at Barabar near Gaya.

Asoka is looked upon by people as the ideal philosopher-king, a king who is also a saint. Not only did he govern well, but he enriched Indian culture also. This can be proved from the various works of art that he left behind. More than this, he taught people religious tolerance, respect for others, and love of the fine things of the spirit.

## CHAPTER SIX

### JAINISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ZOROASTRIANISM

Before we consider the influence of Muslim culture on India, we shall take note of other influential streams of culture.

The first of these is Jainism, which is a religious sect founded by Mahavira (born 599 B.C. and died in 529 B.C.). He was an Indian prince who, until the age of thirty, lived a princely life. Then suddenly he turned ascetic and vowed to neglect his body for ten years. He cast away his royal robes and went into the jungle, where he practised austerities for twelve years and reached Nirvana. Then he came to be called the Jina, the conqueror. This meant that he had conquered every kind of desire. Afterwards he preached his faith to his fellowmen.

He asked people not to have any faith in the gods or the Brahmins. He spoke against the caste system and asked his followers to destroy every desire. He forbade them to hate and to kill. His disciples were not to hurt anything — living beings, plants, or even particles of dust, and were to remain always poor and humble.

Some time after his death, Mahavira himself came to be looked upon as a god. His followers

set up idols of the founder and built magnificent temples for them, but at the same time they did not forget his Three Jewels — Right Faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Living.

We are not, however, concerned so much about Jainism as a religion as with its effect on the cultural life of India. This is to be seen specially in two directions — in architecture and literature. At first the Jain architects used wood generally as their building material, but since wood is not durable, most of the buildings have disappeared. Still, we owe to them fine carvings inside the Jain temples. Specimens of their architecture are also to be found in stupas with fine railings round them and in their cave temples, some of which can be seen even now in the State of Junagarh. So much for Jain architecture before the eleventh century. The history of architecture after this has been divided into four periods. The first or the golden period lasted till the arrival of the Muslims. Specimens of this are to be found at Mount Abu and Girnar. All these show elaborateness of structure and a delicate sense of beauty. During the Mughal period the Jain architecture came to have some admixture of Muslim influence. In the British period the Jains have been equally diligent in building temples. The style of all these is rich and ornate.

There was also a school of architecture in

southern India, the most notable feature of which is the pillar.

Equally great has been the contribution of Jains to literature. At first they produced their books in Ardha-Magadhi, the language spoken by Mahavira. Then they wrote Jain Maharashtra in a language similar to Marathi. Later on they produced books on grammar, dictionaries, moral tales, and books on philosophy in Sanskrit. Their richest contribution was, however, to the literature of South India. One of the earliest books of poems in Tamil is by a Jain monk. The *Kurral* of Tiruvalluvar is a Tamil classic and is read everywhere in South India. A Jain lady, Avvaiyar, was a well-known Tamil poetess, and her sayings are quoted even to this day. It is also believed that Telugu literature and classical Kannada literature owe much to Jain writers.

The most notable Jain writer is Hemachandra who was a versatile man of letters and left behind two dictionaries, a book of grammar, poems, and a handbook of science. Even to-day there are Jain writers in Gujarati and other languages.

It is not so easy to trace the influence of Christianity on Indian culture, though much has been written about Christ and his faith. About two thousand years ago there was born in the village of Nazareth, a Jewish child who was given the name of Jesus. In his youth he followed the calling of his father, who was a carpenter. He

was not educated in the modern sense of the word, though he knew the Bible very well. In one thing he believed passionately, and that was in the coming of a saviour. Another man also believed in it and preached about it. He was John the Baptist. To him the young Jesus went, and when the Baptist was imprisoned, he began to preach in his place. His preaching was of such a quality that very few could resist it. After some time he came to have so many followers that the authorities began to dread his influence. So he was tried and sentenced to death. But he left behind him a faith which became a world religion. The essence of this is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount. But equally dear to the Christians is the personality of Christ, who is looked upon as the Prophet of Love and a Saviour.

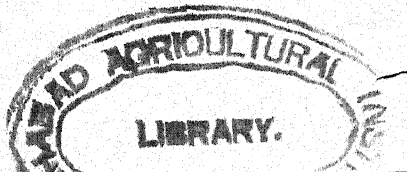
In the eyes of many, the Christian influence and the European influence are one and the same thing though in reality it is not so. It cannot be denied that there has been intercourse between Europe and India since time immemorial. The Greeks came to the Punjab and the North-Western Frontier many centuries ago, and Alexander invaded India in 326 B.C. The influence of Alexander was not very great, but still it must be taken note of. In the first place, it put an end to the isolation between the East and the West, "for it opened up four distinct lines of communication, three by land and one by sea." The Greek



influence on Indian art can be seen in the Gandhara Sculpture, while the Greek influence on Buddhism was also appreciable. In the same way India influenced Europe through its religion and philosophy. During the first three centuries of the Christian era, there was a great deal of trade between India and the Roman empire. This, however, ceased in the fourth century. Then in the fifteenth century Vasco da Gama discovered the route to India and landed at Calicut. Another Portuguese captain came to India next year and established trading relations with the Hindu rulers of Cannanore and Cochin. But the ambitions of these Portuguese were not confined to trade — they wanted to found an empire in the East, but after some success their power came to nothing. The Portuguese were succeeded by the Dutch who had some settlements and factories in India. Then the French came on the scene and even now they have a few settlements in India. The East India Company was formed during the days of Queen Elizabeth and obtained by treaty the right of trade at Surat, Camba, and two other places. Soon the English began to found factories at several places. Afterwards they founded such cities as Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay. In the meantime the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the French lost their foothold in India. Then the English became supreme. Beginning as traders, they remained as rulers.

It should also be remembered that in addition to trading centres the Christians set up missionary settlements. It will not do to give in detail the history of these settlements, which began with the mission of the Jesuits to the court of Akbar. It is enough to say that for three centuries there has been unbroken missionary work in India.

The result of all this has been manifold and has been felt in every sphere of life. On the material side we have railways, telegraph wires, the printing press, and the newspapers. These have changed the face of India. We have schools, colleges, and universities, where Indian students have unwittingly learnt about freedom and democracy. Then we have the India that is becoming fast industrialized; its coal production is going up, new factories are being built, and there are gigantic concerns like the Tata Iron and Steel Company, which employ thousands of labourers. Thus the economic basis of Indian life is being slowly changed. Machines are competing with human labour and everything is undergoing a change. The social system has also altered rapidly. For instance, the old caste system is fast losing its hold and the low caste people are being much better treated. Child marriage has been almost abolished and Suttee has disappeared. The re-marriage of widows is sanctioned and polygamy is not generally practised. The women of India are coming out of purdah and are receiving



higher education. Along with these movements has grown up a nationalist movement which aims at the freedom of India. Similarly in the fields of art and literature European influence has been great. Modern Indian languages have been developed and modern Indian art has received much impetus from the West. As in the field of politics there is a movement towards unity, so in the domain of culture there is an emphasis on the identity of aims.

To make the picture complete we must give an account of Zoroaster, who was born in 660 B.C. in the north-west of Iran. As a child he was wonderful, but when he grew up he left his home in search of salvation. After seven years of meditation, light came to him. Then he went about giving his message. He thought that this world was a great battlefield in which Good and Bad contended for supremacy. Therefore, every man has to choose to which side he would belong. To lead the good life he must be on the side of purity and light. He must reverence life, worship fire, and toil hard.

Some of the followers of Zoroaster left Persia at the beginning of the eighth century after Christ and settled in India. They are called Parsis, after the country from which they came. At first they landed on the island of Diu near the coast of Kathiawar, and from there they went to Gujrat. Later on they founded settlements at

Surat, Nausari, and Bombay. It is, however, Bombay that is the chief centre of their activities.

These Parsis number only a few lakhs. But their influence on India has been quite out of proportion to their number. They are remarkable for their spirit of enterprise and for their readiness to adapt themselves to new conditions. They are efficient traders and big industrialists. They have, therefore, taken their share in expanding the trade and commerce of India and in making it an industrial country. They have been known, too, for their philanthropy and have founded many benevolent institutions for promoting education and social reform. Known always for their love of progress they have played an important part in bringing India into line with some of the most progressive countries of the world. There has always been a noble tradition of patriotism amongst them and some of them have been in the front line of Indian nationalism. Amongst them have been some illustrious men whose names India will always cherish with much respect. Dadabhai Naroji, the grand old man of India, was a great fighter for the freedom of the country, Behramji Malabari is well known as a social reformer, and Sir J. N. Tata who founded the Tata Steel Works was a prince among industrialists and philanthropists. Sir Pherozshah Mehta left behind him a name which fills every Indian with pride.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

The Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca about the year 570-571. He was born three months after his father's death, and it was his grandfather who gave him this name. As a child he was looked after by nurses, with one of whom, Haleema Saadia, he went to live in the desert and there grew up into a strong and manly youth. The tribe to which the nurse belonged was known for its eloquence, and the Prophet learnt to speak Arabic fluently. As a boy he was very active and full of energy. He loved to spend his time in the open air and it gave him much joy to go up the hills, to roam about in the desert, and to look after the cattle in the fields. Even then he came to acquire the reputation of being truthful and noble. When he grew up he was engaged by a widow named Khadija to look after her trade. He went to Syria several times on her behalf and did good business there. Afterwards they married.

The Prophet Muhammad was forty years old when he felt that he had a great mission to fulfil. He announced it to his wife Khadija and his cousin Ali, and they became Muslims. Later on several other persons embraced Islam. But there were many persons who did not like the doctrines of

Islam. They would not give up idol worship; they would not give up lying, drinking, gambling, and cheating. They therefore asked the Prophet Muhammad not to preach his new faith, but he did not listen to them. Soon Islam began to spread, but with it increased the sufferings of the Muslims at the hands of those who had not accepted the faith. Not satisfied with persecuting Muslims, the enemies of Islam thought of slaying the Prophet. His followers therefore asked him to go to and live in Medina. He went and lived there and went on preaching and teaching as well as fighting his enemies. In the end he won, and succeeded in uniting the different tribes of Arabia into a nation. He taught these people new ways of living alone as well as in the company of others, and gave them a strong central government. He thus brought them peace and unity, order, and a sense of fellowship. He then went back to Mecca, the city from which he had been driven out by his enemies. But he went back there as the head of Arabia, as a person who had shown the Arab the way to prosperity in this world and the path to peace and happiness in the next world. He died in A.D. 632.

Such was the Prophet of Islam. While some have dwelt upon his great intellectual gifts, others have been eloquent about his noble character. One writer says, "A nature so pure, so tender, and yet so heroic, inspires not only reverence, but love."

With the true humility of the spirit, the Prophet Muhammad combined loftiness of the soul and purity and kindness of the heart. His devotion to duty was great and his concern for truth ever present. He was kind to his inferiors and servants and was fond of little children. To the sick and the suffering, he gave not only sympathy, but active help. "He never sat down to a meal without first invoking a blessing, and never rose without uttering a thanksgiving. His time was regularly apportioned. During the day, when not engaged in prayers, he received visitors and transacted public affairs. At night he slept little, spending most of the hours in devotion. He loved the poor and respected them, and any who had no home or shelter of their own at night he kept in the mosque near his house."

The Prophet was in the first place the Prophet of Islam. He preached the oneness of God with a sincerity and an enthusiasm which were remarkable. He told people that for whatever they did they were responsible to God and not to any priests. He brought home to them that religion was something which made their lives better as individuals and as members of the nation. Moreover, he told them that whatever they did was bound up with religion. In other words, religion was not a thing apart but something inseparably mixed up with their lives. He asked people to give up evils such as gambling, drinking, the killing of infants,

slavery, and luxury. He asked them to honour women. Not only did he preach the unity of God, but he said to them that all men are one. He taught them to look upon men as brethren.

The Prophet Muhammad was both the preacher of a new religion and the maker of a nation. Before his time, Arabia was divided into four parts. One of these was Hejaz with the sacred city of Mecca. Another was the rocky Arabia which was full of Christian monasteries. It was from there that Islam spread to Palestine, Syria, and Egypt. Then there was Yemen which was in contact with India and China and Abyssinia. There was also the tract near the Persian Gulf. The Prophet united all these into one country. He also united the tribes of Arabia into a nation.

But Islam did not remain confined to the Arabs in Arabia; it spread in Asia and northern Africa. Spain became a centre of Islam and in Persia and Egypt too the banner of Islam waved. From Persia Islam spread to Central Asia and China. Thus it has been said that within about fifty years of the death of the Prophet the Islamic banner flew from Morocco to the Oxus. The spread of Islam, however, meant not only the spread of a religion, but also the spread of Arab civilization. Wherever the Arabs went they left their mark on buildings, roads, languages, arts, dress, manners, and traditions.

What was this Islamic culture? Its essence lay



in certain moral principles set forth in the holy Quran: "There is no doubt in this book a guidance to the pious, who believe in the Unseen, who observe the prayers and distribute charity out of what we have bestowed on them; and who believe in that which we have commissioned thee with, and in that we commissioned others with before thee, and who have assurance in the life to come; and who have received the direction of their Lord." It has been said that these principles are five in number and enjoin on Muslims belief in one God who is powerful, and full of mercy and love. They are asked to control their passions, to practise charity, to offer their gratitude to the Giver of all good, and to be prepared to account for their actions in another existence. For the fostering of a true religious spirit four things — prayers, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage — are necessary, besides so many others.

With regard to women, the creed of Islam is one of respect for them. Islam forbids slavery. According to Syed Ameer Ali the laws of Islam allow liberty of conscience and freedom of worship to every non-Muslim under Muslim rule. "Let there be no compulsion in religion," says the holy Quran. It has, therefore, been said that the Prophet Muhammad did not merely preach toleration; he embodied it into a law. Even in matters of government, Islam stood for the spirit of law, order, and justice. It has been

said, "Wherever the Muslims entered, a change came over the countries; order took the place of lawlessness and peace and plenty smiled on the land. As war was not the privileged profession of one caste, so labour was not the mark of degradation to another. The pursuit of agriculture was as popular with all classes as the pursuit of Islam. The Prophet's devotion to knowledge and science was great and he used to ask his followers to seek for knowledge 'even unto China'." It is said in the holy Quran, "Acquire knowledge, because he who acquires it in the way of the Lord performs an act of piety; who speaks of it, praises the Lord; who seeks it, adores God; who dispenses instruction in it, bestows alms; and who imparts it to its fitting objects, performs an act of devotion to God." It was for this reason that poetry, grammar, history, mathematics, the art of recitation, the art of calligraphy were studied with great care. Later on, literary and scientific works in foreign languages were translated into the Arabic. Astronomy, geography, chemistry, and natural history were developed, and many valuable discoveries were made in these sciences. Medicine and surgery received much impetus, and architecture was greatly favoured.

It would, however, be interesting to know how the Arabs first came to India. It is said that the Arabs were a nation of sailors and traders. They had business connections with India during the

life time of the Prophet or some time afterwards. The Arabs, however, thought seriously of India only when they got a foothold in Persia. The matter was further brought to a head because over the Arabian Sea roamed the pirates from Sind. These made travelling very unsafe. So an expedition of about six thousand men was sent under the command of Muhammad Kasim, a young man of twenty. Within three years he conquered almost the whole of the territory from the mouth of the Indus to the frontier of Kashmir. This marked the beginning of the Muslim conquest of India. We are not, however, concerned with the political, economic, or administrative aspects of this conquest. We want to study only the cultural effects of the Muslim connections with India. These, as everyone knows, have been many. Sir Jadunath Sarkar has shown that the gifts of the Muslims to India have been as many as ten. In the first place, India came to re-establish touch with the outer world which it had lost for some time. India, then, did not remain aloof from the currents of world life but became a part of them. This happened especially because India came to have again a navy of its own. For some time at least, India enjoyed peace and had the Muslim type of good administration. One result of all this was that the arts in India began to develop. Many industries such as shawl making and muslin making were promoted, and a new

style of architecture came into vogue. The country came also to have a kind of common language in Hindustani, and books were written in many languages of India such as Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu. A new religious sect came into being which recognized the unity of God and the unity of mankind. The followers of this sect were called Sufis. As a result of the contact of India with Islam, a new impetus was given to a certain kind of writing. For instance, histories, biographies, and letters were now written in India. The Muslims also introduced hunting and hawking into India and developed the art of war and the art of government.

It should not, however, be thought that Indians received more than they gave. A historian has said that the Arabs learned a great deal from India about the art of government. "Arab scholars went from India to Baghdad and they carried with them two books, *Brahma Siddhanta* of Brahmgupta (a famous astronomer) and his *Khandakhadyaka*. It was from these works that the Arabs learnt the first principles of scientific astronomy. The cause of Hindu learning received much encouragement from the ministerial family of the Barmaks during the Khalifat of Haroun al-Raschid (A.D. 786-808). . . . The Muslims soon secularized the learning they had borrowed from India and presented it to the European world in a new garb."

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### AKBAR

We have already referred to the invasion of India by the Arabs. After the Arabs came the Afghans. It has been often said that the purpose of the Arab invasion was cultural while that of the Afghan invasion was conquest. Amongst these Afghan invaders the two houses of Ghazni and Ghor have left their mark most of all on the history of India. We shall not, however, speak either of Mahmud of Ghazni or Muhamad Shahab-ud-Din Ghor. When the line of Shahab-ud-Din came to an end, India was thereafter ruled by a number of dynasties. First of all, the Slave kings ruled from 1206 to 1288, and then came the Khiljis, who were succeeded by the house of Tughlak. The power of this house was destroyed by Timur. Then the Saiyad line held sway over India for about forty years. When these came to nothing the Lodis began to rule over India, but they were defeated by the Mughals in 1526 and the Mughal empire was established by Babar.

This Mughal empire achieved quite a large number of things. In the first place, it sought to

be an Indian empire in a real sense. It tried to derive its strength from almost all the elements of Indian population; Hindus as well as Muslims contributed to its development, and the Pathans, the Turks, the Persians, the Arabs, and the Hindus all helped to build up its military greatness, its financial stability, and its artistic grandeur. Again, for a long time it remained secular, that is to say, it did not mix up religion with matters concerning the State. It encouraged the study of the history and the sacred books of the Hindus in order to understand them. It fostered the development of the fine arts such as painting and architecture, and gave a new style in dress, gardening, and other matters. At the same time, in the days of the Mughals India came to be more and more in touch with the world outside. Indians no longer lived apart from the other nations of the world but came to influence and be influenced by the people living on the continents of Asia and Europe.

Of all the Mughal emperors who ruled over India the most illustrious was Akbar. His father Humayun was in flight in the deserts of Sind when Akbar was born on 23rd November, 1542. Since Humayun had no settled abode and had to fly from one place to another, he left Akbar and his mother in the court of Hindal, one of his younger brothers, who was the ruler of Herat. Akbar lived under the roof of his uncle for a few

years, at the end of which he went to his father. After that he generally remained by the side of Humayun and had some experience of the hardships and dangers of a king's life. It is said that in his early life he was twice made a captive and escaped death rather narrowly. These things, however, did not daunt the spirit of the brave boy. He became a fighter at the age of nine, and took part in battles in India as well as elsewhere. He was only thirteen when, on the death of his father, he was proclaimed emperor of India.

The boy king, however, had no easy time. His rivals were too many and too powerful and all of them felt that the minor king would not prove very formidable. He had, therefore, to face trouble in India as well as in Kabul. A great battle was fought at Panipat between a Hindu rebel general and his army in which the victory lay with Akbar. It is said that in the battle the Hindu general was wounded and fell down from his elephant. He was then caught and brought before Akbar. His tutor wanted Akbar to take his life but he refused, saying, "He is as good as dead." The battle of Panipat decided the future of Akbar, for it established his position securely as the emperor of India.

For about five years Akbar left the management of the kingdom generally to his tutor. He himself took pleasure only in hunting and shooting. Though many attempts were made to in-

terest him in books and the serious pursuits of life, he remained indifferent. A remarkable change, however, came over him when he was twenty-two years old. He then began to prove that he was capable of thinking and acting for himself, and showed of what mettle he was made. First of all, it became plain to people that he was one of the most manly of emperors they had ever seen. Then his name became a byword for physical strength and endurance. It is said that once he was told about a rebellion in Gujrat. Immediately he made up his mind to be on the spot. Accompanied by a band of trusted friends and soldiers he rode to the scene of rebellion, about six hundred miles from Agra, in eleven days. Nor did he take any rest even when he reached there. With the help of three thousand soldiers he overcame his enemies who numbered about twenty thousand.

Coupled with this bodily strength was his inexhaustible interest even in the most minute details of his work. In the siege of Chitor he worked at a stretch for two nights and a day supervising the work of his workmen who were trying to undermine the walls of the fort. It is said that on that occasion he neither slept for a minute nor spared time to take his meals.

In addition to these qualities he showed broad-mindedness. When he sat in the midst of his councillors he did not let them feel that he was



the wisest amongst them. He always listened with patience to what others had to say and adopted that policy which appealed to him most. In the choice of his ministers, too, he did not show any kind of narrow-mindedness, and he always recognized merit when he found it. Two of his best ministers were Abul-Fazl and Todur Mall, the one a scholar, a poet, a philosopher, and a historian, and the other a great administrator and financier.

Nor did Akbar exercise this kind of tolerance only in the choice of his ministers — he extended it to every detail of administration. For instance, unlike several Muhammadan rulers, he tried to make friends with the Hindus. He repealed all those laws which hit the Hindus hard, and abolished the religious taxes which used to bring a great deal of revenue to the State. Further, he tried to remove the social disabilities which had stood in the way of Hindu Muslim friendship. He did not frown upon those Muslim officers who married Hindu wives. In fact, he himself set an example in this respect by marrying a Hindu wife. At the same time, he permitted his Hindu wife to observe her religious rites in his palace. He went so far as to ask the Hindus to get rid of those abuses which were to be found in their community. He strongly condemned the cruel practice of suttee, and had no end of pity for the child widows. Above all, he had the ambition to

be the most famous monarch that had ever ruled over India. He therefore tried to be great as well as powerful. He used to say, "A monarch should be ever intent on conquest, otherwise his neighbours will rise in arms against him." It was no wonder that throughout his life he tried to add to his territories. Before his death he annexed Rajputana, Bengal, Kashmir, Peshawar, Kabul, Kandahar, Sind, Khandesh, Ahmednagar, Gujrat, and Berar.

But we are not here very much concerned with Akbar's conquests, nor do we wish to give any details about the methods he adopted to give India peace and settled government. It is well known that he drew up a just system of land revenue. He had his empire divided into twelve provinces, each of which was sub-divided into districts. He had a large number of graded servants of the State. The highest were the commanders of ten thousand to seven thousand and below them there were thirty grades. The last grade consisted of the commanders of ten. Similarly he organized his army by strengthening his cavalry.

His influence was felt not only in these directions but in other directions also. He showed the noblest kind of tolerance in the field of religion. Himself a mystic, he tried his best to arrive at religious truth. He strove hard to have a religion of his own in which the common doctrines of all

religions should be represented. It was no wonder that he founded a religion of his own called the Din-i-Ilahi, whose followers worshipped the sun and gave up meat. This religion, however, did not become popular and died with the death of its author. Akbar was so much interested in religions that he built the famous Hall of Worship. There Hindus, Jains, Parsis, Christians, and Muslims used to meet and discuss religious questions. Akbar himself used to preside over these discussions and take a lively interest in them. He thus had a very hospitable mind. Once a party of Jesuit priests came to his court from Goa, and he received them with the utmost courtesy. He let them stay at the court and held discussions with them about religious matters. He was so pleased with them that he let them build a chapel. Not only was he friendly to the followers of other religions but he was kind also to the inhabitants of other countries. It is said that two Englishmen came to his court with letters from Queen Elizabeth and he received them well. This was almost the beginning of India's intercourse with Europe.

Great as Akbar was in these matters, he rendered equally signal service in the realms of art and literature. He was a great builder and during his reign several buildings were erected which combined the beauty of the Muslim architecture with the nobility of Hindu buildings. The fort at Agra and the tomb of Humayun at Fatehpur

Sikri, which are built of red sandstone, bear testimony to this. He was also a patron of painting and music. One of the greatest musicians at his court was the famous Tan Sen, and in the realm of painting he helped painters to evolve a new style which was a combination of Hindu, Muslim, and Italian styles. Writers also flourished in his time. Tulsi Das, Sur Das, and Rahim wrote splendid verses and Faizi translated the *Bhagwad Gita* into Persian. On account of all these things Akbar lives even now. He was not only a great monarch, but he was also one who tried to unite the Hindus and the Muslims.

## CHAPTER NINE

### SHAH JAHAN

Shah Jahan, the third son of the emperor Jahangir and a Rajput princess, was born in 1592, when his grandfather, Akbar, was alive. It is said that Akbar liked him more than any of his grandsons and predicted a great career for him. Nor was he wrong in this. Though Shah Jahan ruled only for about twenty-one years and had the last years of his life darkened by the intrigues of his sons and by what has been described as honourable captivity, he did much to enrich the cultural life of India. It is no wonder that his reign has been described as the golden age of the Mughal empire. This description is accurate in many ways. In the first place, the emperor was extremely rich, and his wealth attracted a large number of visitors, every one of whom was struck with the magnificence of the emperor and his court. Some of these foreign travellers like Bernier have left delightful accounts of Shah Jahan's reign, and though they are not to be taken literally, yet they show what a splendid impression the Mughal ruler and his court made upon them. It should, however, be remembered

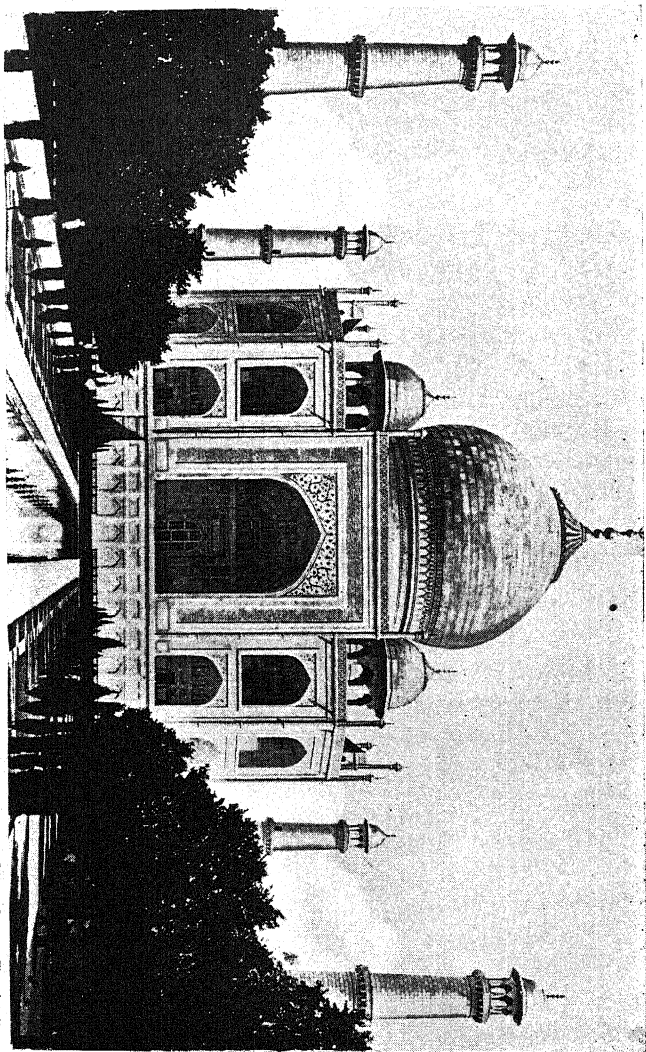
that the wealth of the court was not squandered away on luxuries and pleasures; it was used, on the contrary, in promoting the cultural life of the people. This was certainly expected of a monarch who was so well educated, so God-fearing, and so hard-working.

It is said that Shah Jahan said his prayers five times a day and always observed the Ramazan fast. He got up early in the morning and said his prayers. Then he stood in a window, where the people could have full view of him. From that place he listened to the complaints of the people and witnessed the elephant fights of which he was very fond. He then went to the Public Hall of Audience, a splendid building of red sandstone supported by forty pillars, where he transacted business with his officers, ministers, and soldiers. Then he went to the Hall of Private Audience, where he gave audience to his ministers who wanted to discuss with him matters of a confidential nature. After this he went to the Royal Tower, where he took decisions in consultation with the princes and some selected officers. Then he had his mid-day meal, after which he slept for some time. After this he dispensed charity to those persons whose cases were brought to his notice by his wife Mumtaz-à-Mahal. Again in the afternoon he did State work and also witnessed some sports. In the evening he devoted some time to his official work. Then, after taking

his meal, he retired to bed, where he listened to readings from books of travel, history, and biography. It is said that the autobiography of Babar was his favourite book.

His court was really magnificent and at it were received not only Indians, but also envoys from abroad — from Persia, Turkey, Bokhara, England, and Holland. All these people marvelled at the Peacock Throne which took seven years to complete, and the great beauty and fine workmanship of which won everyone's admiration. It is indeed very interesting to read its description by Tavernier — a foreign traveller who visited the court of Shah Jahan. The centre of an equal amount of interest was the famous diamond called the Koh-i-Noor. Yet the court was not only there to impress people with its splendour; it existed, as it has been said by historians, for promoting culture and enlightenment among the people. It gave much encouragement to the growth of art and literature, and poets, philosophers, scholars, and artists sought admittance to it to have their talents recognized and encouraged. It should be remembered that everyone who went there received the recognition that he deserved. The court was in this way a centre of light and a focus of culture.

It should be remembered that this culture was not the monopoly of a few. The monarch encouraged the education of the people and gave

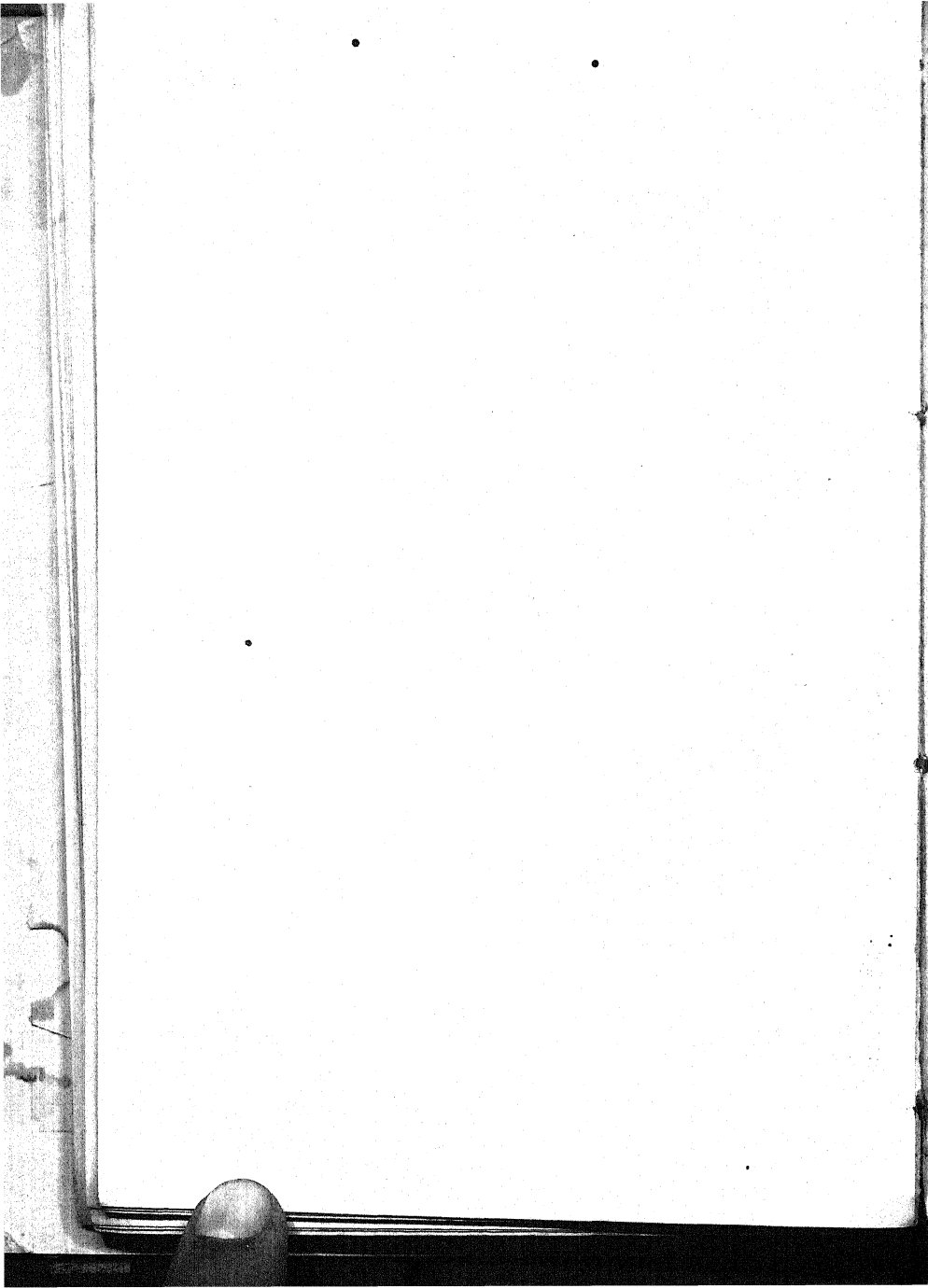


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TAJ MAHAL, AGRA

Photo, Saigum Chand & Co.

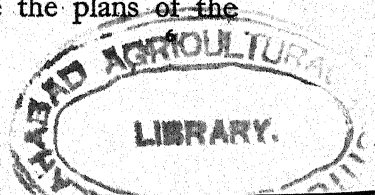




liberal grants to such centres of learning as existed in Kashmir and other provinces. These centres of learning were responsible for the production of much valuable literature. There were some books that were written, under the court's influence, in Persian, but Persian of a heavy and learned kind. There were other books which were written in Persian of a simpler type. These books were of several kinds — books of history, books of letters, books of adventures, dictionaries, translations of Sanskrit works into Persian, biographies, books on medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy. Other books were written in Hindi and Urdu, and it should be remembered that the emperor sought to patronize writers of every kind and description from India as well as abroad.

Shah Jahan was also a great patron of the fine arts, especially of the art of architecture. The buildings that were erected in his reign are his enduring titles to fame. In spite of the fact that they were built long ago, they are still as beautiful as ever and enchant people from all over the world. From them, as it has been said, one gathers impressions of peace and beauty and nobility and grandeur. In a way they show not only the emperor's love of architecture but also his personal tastes. It has been remarked that the monarch understood architecture very well. He asked engineers to prepare the plans of the

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buildings but never gave orders for their construction till he had discussed every detail carefully. It was therefore no wonder that he put up a large number of buildings. At Ajmere he built a mosque in the famous mausoleum and a *barahdari* on the Anna Sagar. He erected many buildings in Kashmir, at Lahore, Ambala, Gwalior, and Kabul. He is, however, remembered most for the buildings that he put up at Agra and Delhi.

At Agra he modified, embellished, and extended the fort built by Akbar, and built the Public Hall of Audience and the Hall of Private Audience. He built the beautiful Samar Burj, where he passed away with his eyes resting upon the Taj where his beloved wife lay buried. He built the Pearl Mosque at a cost of three hundred thousand rupees. It took seven years to complete it, and it is an instance of the beauty and simplicity of the Mughal art.

At Delhi he built a palace which is an instance of the beauty of the ornamental style. It is in this palace that one comes across the famous couplet:

“Verily if there is heaven on earth,  
It is here, it is here, it is here.”

He built, too, Jam-i-Masjid of red sandstone with marble minarets. Nor did he neglect the arts of painting, calligraphy, and music. The paintings of his reign, however, do not show any

originality and are marked by a love for too much ornament. Calligraphy flourished in his reign and we still have many beautiful manuscripts of the period. Music did not make any advances, but neither did it decline. The monarch himself was interested in it and patronized musicians liberally.

The crowning glory, however, of the reign of Shah Jahan is the Taj Mahal at Agra. It is looked upon as one of the seven wonders of the world and is perhaps the most beautiful building in the world. Foreigners as well as Indians have written most eloquently about it and it has inspired artists, poets, and philosophers. Mary Dobson has written a very tender poem about it and Rabin-dranath Tagore has sung of its glory in imperishable verse. Everyone who has looked at it, whether in day time or on a moonlight night when its beauty is enhanced, has marvelled at it. To appreciate its beauty one must see it. One cannot but be struck with the vision of the man who conceived it, the taste of the men who provided the material, and the skill of the workmen who built it. It combines delicacy with beauty, grandeur with nobility, and its white marble, its fine domes and minarets, its screens and inlay work all fill one with wonder. Its site too is most admirable. It stands in a beautifully laid-out garden which enhances its charm, and overlooks the Jamna. The river adds to the beauty of what was designed and constructed by man. It is,

therefore, not strange that it moves the heart, delights the eye, stirs up the imagination, and fills the soul with peace. Twenty thousand workmen worked on it for twenty years and it cost four crores of rupees. No one, however, doubts that the labour and the money were not well spent.

The Taj is not to be looked upon merely as a specimen of architecture which combines the Indian and Persian styles, but as a great monument to Love. As is well known, this monument was built by Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz-à-Mahal. She was born in 1594 and was the daughter of Asaf Khan, who played such an important part in the reign of Jahangir. She was betrothed to Shah Jahan, when he was sixteen years of age, and as soon as they were married Shah Jahan came completely under her influence. This was due to her great beauty, her accomplishments, and her wifely devotion. As long as she lived, Shah Jahan had complete confidence in her and she stood by him through thick and thin. She gave him not only love and affection but also wise counsel. The emperor consulted her whenever he was in any difficulty and she always gave him valuable advice. In spite of the fact that she occupied such an exalted position, she felt for the poor and the unfortunate, and widows and orphans and persons in distress never appealed to her in vain. She

pleaded for those who were the victims of injustice and she acted as a mother to many orphans. Whatever money she had she gave away to the poor. The source of all this kindness was her piety—she was regular in her prayers and never failed to observe the fasts.

Noble as a queen and devoted as a wife, she was equally affectionate as a mother. She bore Shah Jahan fourteen children and it was on the birth of the fourteenth child that her health completely failed. Then she felt that her end was near. She therefore sent for Shah Jahan and spoke to him in piteous tones about her approaching death. At that time she begged of him two favours. One was that he would not marry again, and the other was that he would build a tomb over her grave which would be the admiration of the world. Shah Jahan made both these promises and she died in peace. After her death Shah Jahan kept his promise. He did not marry again and he built the magnificent Taj. But after her death he felt like retiring from the world. He used to say, "Empire has no sweetness, life itself has no relish for me now." As long as he lived he bore the memory of her love in his heart, and even when he died his eyes were turned towards the last resting-place of his beloved wife.

## CHAPTER TEN

### SIVAJI

The Hindus in India built up and lost their empires a great many times, and in the history of India we find many Hindu emperors. Shri Ram Chandra was one of these, and so was Yudhishtira. Chandra Gupta established a mighty empire which was extended by Asoka. The Guptas founded an empire which was ruled over by Samudargupta, Vikramaditya, and Harsha. The empire of Vijayanagar in the south which lasted for about three hundred years was a flourishing empire. A Hindu empire was founded in Maharashtra by Sivaji. This, too, like the other Hindu empires did not last long. It is, however, interesting to know something about the builder of this empire.

Sivaji came of a Maratha family named the Bhonslas. For a long time it remained obscure, but it came into prominence during the time of Maloji and Vithoji. They owed their good fortune mainly to their valour, for they acquired such high reputation as soldiers that they were always in demand by the kings of the Deccan. It was on account of this that Maloji was able to make a

very fortunate marriage. But though he had been married long he had no child. At last after many years he was blessed with a son whom he named Shahaji.

Shahaji grew into a brave young man, and his father, who was very ambitious, wanted him to marry into a noble and aristocratic family. His master had a daughter and he fixed upon her as the bride of his son, but he could not bring about this marriage for some time because he was so inferior in rank. The king of Ahmednagar, however, conferred upon Maloji the title of Raja and gave him an estate consisting of Poona and a few other places. His master then consented to a union between his daughter and Maloji's son.

Shahaji developed into a daring soldier whose services were always in demand either by the king of Ahmednagar or the king of Bijapore. He thus lived fighting, generally away from his home. It was to him and Jijabai that a son was born in April, 1627, at Shivner Fort near Junar. The son was named Sivaji after the god Siva.

Two influences shaped Sivaji's early life. One of these was his mother. She always reminded him that he was a descendant of noble Rajputs and should ever try to be a warrior and a hero. Many were the stories of Rajput valour that she told him and all these inflamed his ambition. She further trained him in the ways of a pious Hindu — she would send him to the temple every



morning and evening, and she would repeat to him stories from the holy books of the Hindus.

The other influence in Sivaji's early life was Dadoji Kondadev. He was a Brahmin, who managed the estates of Sivaji's father. He also acted as Sivaji's guardian and teacher. To be sure, he gave no bookish education to Sivaji; he never taught him how to read and write, but he taught him the use of arms and made him an excellent rider, swordsman, and archer. He let him explore the mountains around and asked him to make friends with manly and daring youths. Further, he told him about the exploits of the Hindu heroes like Arjun and Bhima. He asked him to be as skilled in the use of arrows as Arjun and as mighty as Bhima. In his heart of hearts Sivaji determined to be a hero.

When he came of age he thought of making a kingdom for himself and ruling over it. He therefore gathered round him some hillmen, and with the help of some of his friends he thought of taking possession of some of the forts that lay near Poona. He succeeded in his designs and took some forts which really belonged to the Sultan of Bijapore. It is said that in some of these forts he discovered treasures.

The Sultan of Bijapore did not like Sivaji's high-handedness and took action against him, but, later on, they came to terms with one another. Sivaji was acknowledged as an independent ruler

and was allowed to keep possession of the forts which he had captured.

After this Sivaji and the Mughals came to grips. First of all Shaista Khan, the Mughal governor, attacked the Marathas, succeeded against them for some time, and took possession of Poona and a few other places, but after some time he had to fly for his life.

When Shaista Khan failed to subdue Sivaji, Aurangzeb sent Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur and Diler Khan, an Afghan general, against him. They were able to capture some of Sivaji's forts, and to make terms with him. It was agreed that Sivaji should give up some of his forts and should also help the emperor against Bijapore. Sivaji kept his word. Aurangzeb then sent him a letter of thanks and a jewelled sword. Another time he sent him a robe of honour. He invited him to the Mughal court, and Sivaji accepted this invitation on the advice of his mother and his Guru Ramdas. He left for Agra in the company of his son and a few trusted companions. When he came near Agra, he was received by an officer of the court who was not of a very high rank. This naturally annoyed him, but he did not betray his displeasure. He reached Agra on the day when the birthday of the emperor was being celebrated. A great durbar was held at which all the nobles were present. Sivaji was presented to the emperor, but was given a place in the ranks of inferior

nobles. This hurt his pride, but he could not protest against it. Then he was asked to lodge outside the city in a house which was not really a guest-house. It was guarded day and night, and it was not possible for Sivaji to move out of it. He chafed at all this, but it was not possible for him to conciliate the emperor. All the time he knew that he must effect an escape from the place of confinement. Long did he think over it, but at last he hit upon a plan, and escaped safely. Some months later he reached Poona after seeing Allahabad, Benares, Gaya, and Jagan Nath. When the Mughals learned that he had reached Poona safely, a treaty was concluded between Aurangzeb and Sivaji.

It was then thought that Sivaji should be crowned emperor. For this purpose a Brahmin priest was sent for from Benares. When he arrived, he performed the ceremonies of coronation according to the ancient rites of the Hindus. This was the occasion for many festivities and acts of charity. Sivaji went through the streets of Poona in a big procession with his soldiers, horses, and elephants. He had himself weighed against gold which he gave away to the Brahmins. He conferred special privileges upon his nobles and gave titles and robes to his ministers.

Sivaji governed his kingdom well, but the last years of his life were embittered by many intrigues. He passed away in 1683 at the age of fifty-three.

It is a pity that Sivaji's relations with the Muslim kings were not always cordial, but no one can deny the fact that he was an empire builder. It is, however, to be remembered that his empire did not last long. This was due to many reasons. In the first place, it was due to the fact that all the time that Sivaji lived there were constant fights, with the result that no attention could be paid to the growth of commerce or the increase of the wealth of the people. In the second place, no attempt was made to educate the people and to consolidate them. In the third place, there was too much intrigue at the court, and this naturally weakened the moral tone of the court as well as of society.

Sivaji himself was a man of great courage and enterprise. In his private life he was a model for many persons of his generation. He was a "devoted son, a loving father and an attentive husband". He was very religious. He loved to hear readings from the holy books and was fond of hymns and religious stories. He always felt very happy in the company of holy persons, and was especially devoted to Tukaram and Ramdas, the two most famous saints of Maharashtra. Several times he tried to get Tukaram to stay at his court, but the saint would not agree. In spite of everything, he found time to listen quite often to recitals from the holy books. Upon Guru Ramdas he looked as if he was his religious.

preceptor, and consulted him at every critical juncture in his life. Whenever a battle had to be fought or an important step had to be taken he went to him for advice. In fact, he always derived much inspiration for his life work from religion. His religion, however, was not such as made him blind to the virtues of the holy men belonging to other faiths. He was equally respectful to Muslim saints and showed every consideration for them. He was a very generous person and took pleasure in giving large sums away to Brahmins and holy men of all faiths. He lived a spotless life, and he respected women of all faiths and creeds. No soldier in his army could think of ill-treating a woman without extreme peril to himself.

He was a born leader of men and the hero of his soldiers. Whoever went near him was struck with his personality. He extorted admiration and loyalty from all who saw him. He was a good judge of men, and his selection of generals, governors, ambassadors, and secretaries was always judicious. His administration therefore was as efficient as the conduct of his campaigns was methodical. As a ruler of men he tried to be just to all his subjects irrespective of their creed, and did not discriminate between one subject and another. He protected all kinds of religious establishments such as temples and mosques and was ever careful about the welfare of peasants. He was a military genius of a high order and

organized his army and carried through his campaigns very successfully. Prof. H. G. Rawlinson has summed up his character and achievements beautifully in the following paragraph: "He is described as short and slight, with long arms, an aquiline nose and a pointed beard. He had piercing eyes, and a frank, pleasing manner. He was a born leader, ruthless in war and a stern disciplinarian. No one on pain of death might bring a woman into camp. He was sincerely religious, and looked upon himself as inspired with a mission to be the deliverer of the country; he was devoted to his preceptor Ramdas, by whose teaching he was guided. At one time, it is said, he laid his kingdom at the feet of his Guru and received it back as a gift of God, for which reason the national standard of the Marathas was the orange-coloured robe of the ascetic. The nobility of Sivaji's character is exemplified by his conduct in the field. He studiously refrained from molesting the women and children of his opponents, and respected religious shrines."

Sivaji is great equally for his philosophy of life, for his genius in administration, for his success in organizing the empire, and for his contribution to Indian culture. In his personal life he exemplified purity and regulated it by a high sense of morality. Deeply religious in nature, he showed that spirit of tolerance which is the real mark of a religious man. He imposed

high standards of morality and purity upon others and never spared those who showed intolerance in their dealings with others and especially with those of other faiths.

He built up a large empire and ruled it well. He wielded autocratic power and had the whole authority in his own hands. It was he who was the final authority in everything, in the appointment of officers, in the details of administration, in the conduct of campaigns, and in the conclusion of treaties. He was also the final court of appeal. He could decide all disputes of whatever nature. He had, however, a council of eight ministers to assist him, such as the prime minister, the revenue minister, the historian, the chief secretary, the foreign secretary, the commander-in-chief, the head of the religious department, and the chief justice.

All this power rested upon an army which consisted of cavalry, infantry, and artillery. Though it was mainly Indian in character, Europeans were recruited for the artillery. It had a chief commander and under him were placed commanders of one thousand and five thousand. The havaldar was the lowest officer and was at the head of twenty-five soldiers. The salary of these was paid direct from the treasury, and Sivaji himself looked into the recruitments to the army. This army was used for keeping law and order in the kingdom, but it was also em-

employed for raiding the neighbouring lands.

In addition to this Sivaji had a regular system of land revenue administration, which was very much like that of Akbar. The officers knew the land under cultivation in every village and got about two-fifths of the produce. In times of famine the land revenue was remitted and loans were advanced to peasants for improving their lands. Sivaji was therefore not only a military genius but also a great administrator.

This is enough to show what aspects of Indian culture Sivaji exemplified in his life. He placed religion at the centre of things and with great modesty looked upon himself only as an instrument for the uplift of his country. He showed the true spirit of religious tolerance. He respected other faiths and their followers and saints. He insisted upon high standards of conduct. None could ill-treat a woman or show disrespect to her.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY

The history of India can be divided into three periods — ancient, mediæval, and modern.

Modern India dates from India's contact with the West. Naturally this has been an era of strife and struggle, but it has also been a time of noble activity. Indians have done much valuable work in the fields of learning, science, and knowledge, and they have also tried to reform themselves in the social spheres of life. In the realm of the spirit, too, they have done many worthy things and no one would doubt that they have made every effort to advance and unify India politically. The impulse for all this has come from many different directions and from many different men. Of all the persons who have given a direction to the life of new India the most honoured is Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was born at a critical time in the history of this country, and he did much to shape its political, social, and religious life.

In order to understand Raja Ram Mohan Roy fully we should understand the condition of the country as it was when he was born. In the realm of literature there was no great master;

there was no great writer in Sanskrit, and great writers of modern Indian languages in spite of their former glory were unknown. No work worth the name was done in the field of philosophy, and religion had become a matter of formulas. There was blind superstition everywhere, and there were many kinds of social injustice practised. Politically Indians were divided. As regards education they were very backward. There were practically no schools and colleges, and education was imparted through old-fashioned schools.

Ram Mohan Roy had, however, the vision and courage of a seer. Though there was darkness all around, he saw the light. Even at the age of sixteen he felt that idol worship was no good. He therefore spoke against it, with the result that his father, who was an orthodox Hindu, expelled him from his home. He took this patiently and devoted himself to studying various religions. He went as far as Tibet and made a study of Buddhism there. Then he was reconciled to his father and came back to India. So great was his thirst for knowledge that he asked his father to send him to Benares, so that there he could study Sanskrit and ancient Hindu shastras. But the study of Sanskrit only did not satisfy him. He learned English and read the sacred books of the Christians. He had an inquiring spirit and made a close study of three of the great religions of the world—Hinduism, Buddhism, and

## Christianity.

After a short career as a Government servant he settled down in Calcutta where he devoted himself entirely to the task of national regeneration. The most important thing that he accomplished was that he introduced English education into India. He knew that unless India acquired a knowledge of modern science it could not make much progress. He also knew that in this he would be opposed by his own countrymen. He did not, however, care. As soon as he found that the Directors of the East India Company had set apart a sum of a lakh of rupees for educational purposes, he started asking that public schools should be provided for teaching English to Indian students. It was on account of his efforts that private schools, Government schools, and Christian missionary schools sprang up. He himself with the help of some friends founded in Calcutta the Hindu College which is now known as the Presidency College.

The full story of the foundation of this College is told in the evidence which Dr. Alexander Duff gave before the Select Committee of the House of Commons. He said how the idea of starting a College came to a watchmaker, Mr. David Hare, who, with the active support of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, accomplished it. The Government had set apart a lakh of rupees for the education of Indians, and then there appeared

two groups of people in India. Some wanted schools for the teaching of only Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit, and there were others who thought that there should be schools and colleges in India on the model of English public schools. This controversy went on for a number of years and at last those who wanted the introduction of western education won. They, however, won because Ram Mohan Roy worked incessantly for it. It was also he who pressed the various Christian missions in India to start schools for the education of Indians. He wrote to several missionaries in England asking them to send able teachers who could teach European learning and science. For a long time no one paid any heed to his appeals, but in the end the Church of Scotland sent Dr. Alexander Duff to India, and he became the pioneer of English education in this country.

Dr. Duff was made welcome by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. It was he who placed a building at his disposal for opening a school, and it was also he who sent some students there. He himself continued to visit this school for a month, so that the teachers and the students should not feel discouraged. Thus he opened the doors of English education to Indian boys. He started a school of his own called The Anglo-Hindu School, where free education in English was imparted to Hindu boys. This school continued to flourish for some time, and it is worthy to note that

Maharshi Devindranath Tagore, father of Rabin-dranath Tagore, received his early education there. One of the noblest features of this institution was that it imparted secular as well as religious education.

Another service that he rendered in the field of education is that he created Bengali prose literature. It is true that Bengal had already produced some worthy poets, but before Ram Mohan Roy no one thought of writing books on philosophy, religion, history, and literature in Bengali prose. It was he who began to write books—serious books—in Bengali prose. He translated several works from Sanskrit into Bengali and wrote textbooks on grammar, geometry, and geography. He was the first journalist in Bengali, too, and started a paper which did much for the education of the people.

Though he was so much in favour of western education, he did not want to neglect Sanskrit and Aryan culture, for he had a hand in rendering the study of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Vedant popular. He started a Vedant College. He translated some of the masterpieces of Sanskrit into English, Bengali, and Hindi.

Not content with these things, he worked for the political awakening of the country. Sir Surendranath Bannerjee aptly described him as the father of constitutional agitation in India. It was he who made the people conscious of their

political and civil rights, and it was also he who said that the people should make known their grievances and ask for their redress. The first thing that he did in this direction was to advocate the cause of a free press. When it was decreed that no paper could be published without a licence from the Government, he sent a memorial to the Governor-General against this order. When the Governor-General rejected the memorial he submitted a new memorial to the King. When the Jury Bill was passed which laid down that no Christian should be tried by a Hindu or a Muslim juror, he strongly protested against it.

He went to England and advocated many measures for the benefit of India. Among the principal measures were the substitution of English for Persian as the official language of the courts of law, the appointment of Indian assessors in the civil courts, trial by jury, the separation of the offices of the Judge and the Revenue Commissioner, and of those of the Judge and the Magistrate, the codification of the criminal law and also of the civil law in India, the large employment of Indians in the civil service of the country, and the consultation of public opinion before enacting any legislation. Though himself a Zamindar, Ram Mohan Roy earnestly pleaded the cause of the agricultural peasants against the Zamindars. He showed that, though the Zamindars were greatly benefited by the Per-

manent Settlement of 1793, the condition of the actual cultivators had continued to be as miserable as ever, the Zamindars being at liberty to increase the rent constantly. The remedy he asked for was, firstly, the prohibition of any further rise in rent, and secondly, a reduction in the revenue demanded from the Zamindar so as to ensure a reduction in the rent. Ram Mohan was the champion of the people at large and not of the class to which he himself belonged.

If this work in the political field was memorable, his work in the cause of social reform had far-reaching consequences. He worked for the abolition of the inhuman custom of suttee. For a long time the Government remained indifferent to what he said, but he went on pressing for it through his writings and speeches till at last the Government had to yield. By getting this custom abolished he paved the way for other kinds of social reform. He said that we should not stick to customs only because they are old. Moreover, in the cause of reform we should seek the aid not only of the shastras but also of the Government. He both talked social reform and practised it. For many years it had been thought that a visit to England or any other country abroad was an irreligious act. Ram Mohan Roy set this idea aside and went to England, thereby liberating the people of India from a silly old custom.

He worked whole-heartedly in the cause of

women. He wanted them to be educated, he worked against polygamy, and he sympathized with the Hindu widows.

In the field of religion, too, he made his influence felt by founding the Brahmo Samaj. It is true that the Brahmo Samaj is not a great force now, but no one can deny that by starting it Raja Ram Mohan Roy wanted the people to worship one God and to believe in the brotherhood of man. His one aim was to work for the spiritual brotherhood of man. He wanted Hindus and Muslims, Christians and Jews to be united in the worship of the same God.

Such were the achievements of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and so much he did for India. You would naturally ask what sort of man he was. It should be remembered that he was a man of great intellectual powers, and knew many languages such as Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Greek, and English. His knowledge of English was enviable and he wrote this very difficult language very effectively. He was a learned man and knew very well the scriptures of the Hindus, Christians, and Mohammadans and could discuss them very ably with any Pandit, missionary, or Maulvi. To the last day of his life he preserved his wonderful memory and his powers of mind. He was a great student, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than the study of books.

Great in intellect, he also possessed a tender



heart. He was a dutiful son and was kind to all his relations and friends. He never spoke harshly even to his servants. His heart always bled for the poor, and he did all he could to help them. In fact, any kind of tyranny or injustice moved him to action.

Ram Mohan Roy was born in a small village in Bengal. His father was a Zamindar though his estates were not very large. His mother was a pious Hindu woman. Even as a boy he showed remarkable intelligence. He went to the village school and learnt Bengali very quickly. Then a Muslim teacher taught him Arabic and Persian. At the age of nine he went to Patna where he read Arabic and Persian. From Patna he went to Benares where he studied Sanskrit.

He then returned to his home, where he shocked the old Brahmins by telling them that it was no use worshipping idols. They reported against him to his father who felt much annoyed with him. He did not even speak to him for many days. This disheartened Ram Mohan Roy so much that he left his village, and for four years travelled all over India. He then went to Tibet where he made a study of Buddhism. He, however, came into conflict with some Buddhist priests who began to hate him a great deal. Some of them even thought of killing him, but his life was saved by some noble women.

After four years he was brought home, and was

reconciled to his father. He then married, but even after his marriage he began to study European languages. After a few years he had to leave his home again because he fell foul of the Brahmins whom his father respected very much. They did not like his independent views and created trouble for him.

On leaving home he looked for a job, and found one as a clerk in the court of a judge at Rangpur. He worked so efficiently there that he was soon raised to be a dewan, but his heart was not in this kind of work. So he went and settled in Calcutta. There he dedicated himself to the service of his people. What he did there has already been briefly described. While on a visit to England in 1833 he fell ill and died.

Of all his services to India the most memorable is the introduction of western education. If he had not been a pioneer in this field, Sir Syed Ahmed would not have been able to do so much for the education of his community by founding a college at Aligarh, which is at present a university. Nor could Sir Ashutosh have thought of reorganizing the Calcutta University when he became the Vice-Chancellor. Both these great leaders of education worked on the foundations laid by Ram Mohan Roy, for both believed as vehemently as he in the liberating power of knowledge and in spreading the blessings of culture and science among the people of India.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### M. K. GANDHI

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi or Gandhiji, has dominated the life of India for the last twenty years to such an extent that it is not possible to think of India without him. In the eyes of many people the India of to-day is the India of Gandhi. He has given an impetus and direction to its life such as no one else has given. He has, in fact, stood as a champion and representative of India in many ways. People generally feel interested only in his political activities, but he is not merely a politician who wants to win freedom for India in the political field. He has been an educationist and has been advocating a new kind of national education which is cultural as well as vocational, liberal as well as practical. In an article that he wrote on national education some years ago he pointed out the three defects of the present system of education. He said that the education which the students in India received at present was such as did not fill them with pride in their own culture—in their own civilization, their own home life, their own village scenes. Gand-

hiji therefore wants that kind of education which can make an Indian student love his own country, and his own people, and their culture and civilization. In the second place, he thinks that our education at present is too bookish. It teaches our students to despise manual labour. He feels that every student should learn some kind of craft such as hand-spinning or hand-weaving, for apart from other things it would provide him with an occupation afterwards. Again, he believes that education should be the education of the heart also, that is to say, it should aim to train character. Thirdly, he believes that education should be imparted through the medium of the mother tongue. All these ideas of his on national education have been embodied in the Wardha Scheme of Education which is being put into force in several states and provinces of India.

He is not only an educationist, he is an economist too, though his science of economics is quite different from that of the modern man. The modern man believes in machinery and in the industrialization of his country, but Gandhiji is against machines and industrialization. The only machine he cares for is the spinning-wheel, and instead of big and flourishing industrial towns he wants to have small and smiling villages. It is for these reasons that he has done so much to popularize Khaddar and to restore the old village economy. No one has been a more fervent advo-

cate of Khaddar and the hand-spun cloth than he, and no one has done more than he to revive the old village industries. He has set up two organizations for this purpose—the one for encouraging the old hand-loom industry of India, and the other for developing the old village crafts. Perhaps these things appear to many people as impracticable, but Gandhiji, who is aware of the evils of the machine and of the industrial life, thinks that the soul of India can be saved only if it takes to the old village crafts. He believes he would be adding to the happiness of the people in India who number many millions and the majority of whom live in villages. He, in fact, believes, and rightly too, that the centre of Indian life is the village and that the backbone of the Indian population is the villager. He, therefore, works for the greatest good of the greatest number. If one were to go to Sevagram where Gandhiji stays, one would find a village industry museum where articles made in the villages of India are shown, and no one who looks at those articles would think that they are not good.

This is, however, only one aspect of Gandhiji's activity. To most people in India he seems to be a great patriot. His patriotism is, however, not one-sided. It is true that he loves India and is ready to suffer and work for her freedom, but it is also true that he does not want India to be a source of danger to the peace and freedom of

other countries. He thinks of an India in which the people would be free and happy, enjoying economic well-being and leading a full life. But he also believes that this India would be on the most friendly relations with its neighbours and other countries. His India would not subdue other people and other countries, nor would it enslave other nations. His patriotism is therefore based on love and peace.

Gandhiji does not want merely peaceful relations with other countries, he wants peace inside India too. For this reason he wants Hindu-Muslim unity. He believes that India cannot achieve anything unless Hindus and Muslims learn to live like brothers and work for their common motherland. He has said many a time that this problem is nearest his heart and that though it has baffled him, he would work for it till the last day of his life. So he stands for peace amongst the various communities of India as well as amongst the various classes of India. He wants the capitalist to understand the labourer and the zamindar the tenant. He wants there to be peaceful relations between one community and another and between one class and another.

This apostle of peace is the best friend of the poor. When he came back to India from South Africa, the first thing that he did was to interest himself in getting the grievances of the labourers in Champaran in Behar redressed. Ever since that

day he has been a sturdy champion of the poor. The Harijans in India have found in him their best friend. For their sake he resorted to a fast unto death and for their welfare he collected and spent several lakhs of rupees. He has provided special stipends for their education and has striven to raise their economic level. Public places and temples which were formerly not open to them have through his efforts been opened. He has also fought for and secured them political rights. He is their great protector and benefactor.

This is, however, only one aspect of his humanitarian zeal. He hates injustice and cruelty of every kind. He is a friend not only of man but also of animals and birds. He does not want people to kill animals and birds for sport or for adorning their homes and bodies. He has always raised his voice against cruelty of this kind whenever he has seen it.

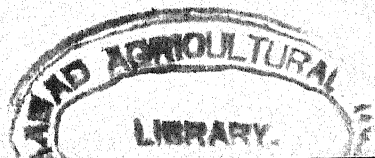
One would, however, wonder from where comes this man's matchless power and influence. To be sure it comes from his soul force. This apostle of non-violence has acquired soul force through a great deal of spiritual discipline. At his ashrama everyone has to take the vow of truth, the vow of non-killing, the vow of celibacy, the vow of purity, the vow of non-stealing, and the vow of non-possession. It means that he must never resort to untruth even in the interest

of his country, and must not take the life of any living being. He must learn to control his animal passions and must eat in order to live and not live in order to eat. He must not hold possessions, nor take anything that belongs to another person. In addition to these vows he must take vows to use the articles made in his own country, must not be afraid of anybody, must be prepared to work with his own hands, and must love his own mother tongue. He does not merely prescribe these vows for others — he practises them himself. Above all, he wants to be known as a seeker of truth. He has written his own life story *My Experiments with Truth*. He has always tried to follow the path of truth, and has sometimes given up a thing simply because there was a lie at the bottom of it.

Another thing that distinguishes him is his love of simplicity and sacrifice. He is a person who has reduced his wants to a minimum. He has the minimum of clothes and requires the minimum necessities of life. He is always prepared to make sacrifices in the cause of others.

A true Hindu, he has respect for other religions. He has studied lovingly the Quran and the Bible and is full of respect for the prophets and saints of other faiths and countries.

Such is Gandhiji, the man of peace. He was born on the 5th October, 1869, in the small town of Porbunder in Kathiawar. His father was



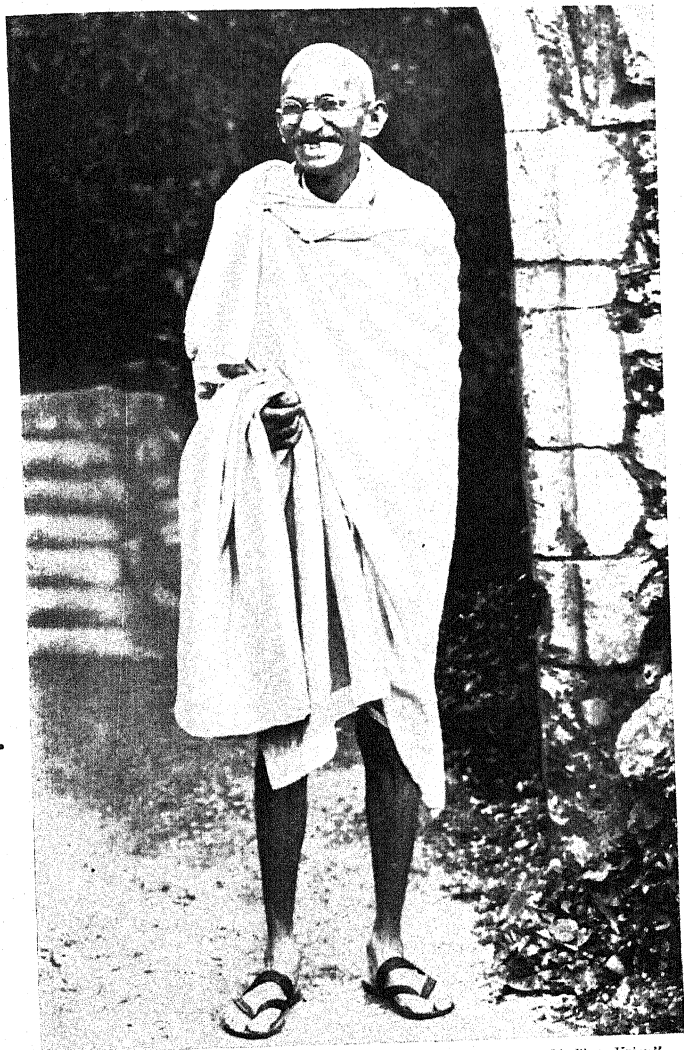


Karamchand Gandhi, Dewan of Rajkot. "My father was a lover of his clan," wrote Gandhiji, "truthful, brave and generous, but short-tempered." His mother was a very pious woman who had much influence on him. "The outstanding impression that my mother has left on my memory is one of saintliness," he has written. He spent his childhood in Porbunder and was educated at the local school. He did not give any promise of his greatness at that time, but was shy and fond of books. Some of the books that he read at that time such as the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas produced a great impression on him. He was married at the age of thirteen, though the marriage meant for him only rich dinners and good clothes.

He was educated at college at Bhavnagar from where he went to England to qualify himself for the Bar. Before he went abroad his mother made him promise three things — he would not eat meat; he would not drink wine; and he would lead a chaste life. In spite of many temptations he stuck to these vows.

After being called to the Bar he came back to India and began to practise at the Bombay High Court. He then went to Kathiawar from where he proceeded to South Africa, because he was entrusted with an important case there.

In South Africa he stayed for more than twenty years, and worked for equal status for Indians.



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GANDHI



There Indians were not treated well; they were thought to be inferior to Europeans. For instance, he himself was not once allowed to travel in a coach with a European and was not permitted to stay in a European hotel. To redress all these grievances he resorted to Satyagrah. Then he founded an ashrama where he gathered round him people of similar views. All these people lived a simple life, worked with their hands, and practised love even towards those who hated them.

He came back to India in 1914 and founded an ashrama at Sabarmati in the Bombay Presidency. During these years he worked for the labourers of Champaran, the peasants of Khairatpur, and the mill labourers of Ahmedabad. It was in 1920 that he plunged into politics and since then he has seldom been out of it. He has courted imprisonment several times, and several times he has undertaken fasts. But he has been not only a troublesome fighter, he has always been anxious for peace and it was for this reason that he concluded a pact with Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India, and went to the Round Table Conference in London to frame a scheme of Swaraj for India. When the new scheme of reforms was introduced he allowed Congressmen to work the provincial governments in some provinces for some time. When they resigned, he asked them to fight again for the freedom of the country, but in a peaceful manner.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore was a world figure and has his admirers in every part of the globe. He was perhaps one of the most many-sided personalities that India has ever produced. He was a great poet — a poet whose work is appreciated from many different points of view and by persons of varying grades of intelligence. There are some who think that his poetry brings us face to face with the reality of God. It is at once universal and personal and appeals to people of a ripe intelligence, of a deep culture, and of a spiritual vision. There are others who think that his poetry is popular in the best sense of the word. The late Mr. Montagu, who was Secretary of State for India at one time, described how during his visit to India he rode through a forest at night. He almost lost his way in the forest, but after wandering for some time he came upon two or three men who were sitting round a fire. On seeing them, he got down from his horse and took rest for a while. There he listened to songs. Later on, a poor and ragged boy joined that

group and sang a song. This song impressed Mr. Montagu most for its beautiful words and music. He asked the boy who had written that song, but he did not know. The boy only said that the song was being sung everywhere and by everybody. Some days afterwards Mr. Montagu happened to listen to that very song and again asked the name of the person who had written it. He was told that it was by Rabindranath Tagore.

It is clear from this how the songs of Rabindranath Tagore appeal to all sorts of people and there is no reason why they should not, for there is something in them which can interest every person. If a person has spiritual leanings, he can find much to move him in the poetry of Tagore. His poetry celebrates God's love for man and man's love for God. He looks upon God not only as father but also as mother, friend, lord, and lover. He feels that God is present everywhere and that His beauty encompasses everything. If a person wants to read poetry which breathes the spirit of idealism, he cannot do better than read Tagore's work, for it is full of noble aspirations. He was a poet of what is good, what is beautiful and what is beneficent. He was a poet who dedicated himself to noble causes. A patriotic person would find many patriotic songs written by Tagore. It is for this reason that he has been described by C. F. Andrews as the national poet of Bengal. He has written:

“Blessed is my birth, because I was born in  
the country,  
Blessed is my life, mother, because I love  
thee.”

He deeply loved India. Yet he was not a poet of narrow patriotism, he was also the singer of universal love — of love that rises above the barriers of castes and creeds and countries and races. He was, in fact, a poet who wrote about subjects of such universal interest as love, death, nature, life, childhood, man, and God. A person interested in nature will find in Tagore descriptions of scenes and objects of nature which he will always remember. He wrote about men and women, children and young men in a charming and understanding way. Above all, he was a poet with a message, and his message is about the dignity of the human soul, about the glory of renunciation and love and self-sacrifice. To appreciate all these things one has only to read “Git-anjali”, “The Gardener”, “The Crescent Moon”, and some of his plays like “Chitra” and “The Post Office”.

It is not only as a poet that Tagore is remembered. He also wrote stories and novels, essays and biographies, books on history and books on science which are read by thousands of people. He had a most richly stored mind and he was in some ways one of the most powerful intel-

lects of his time. In his stories and novels he gave interesting studies of the life and people of Bengal. It is said that no one has described so well the life of Bengal as it is to be found on the banks of its rivers. Moreover, his novels and stories are about children, boys, men and women, young and old, servants and masters, landlords and politicians; in short many different types of men and women. In his essays he explained his mission as a writer, as well as gave helpful suggestions to others about writing.

He was also looked upon as a thinker — an original and powerful thinker. He had his own ideas about everything and it is not possible to state even briefly some of those ideas, but one thing for which his memory is revered all over the world must be stated. He stood for unity between the East and the West, or to put it in a different way he was an internationalist. He thought that while the East should learn from the West how to make use of science, the West should imbibe from the East its love of the spirit and the soul. He felt that all nations should be united and form one family. Nothing pained and shocked him more than war, and he was always an apostle of peace in this world where people seem eager to fight one another. Above all, he thought that there should be unity of culture. Indians should understand the cultures of China, Japan, Europe, and America, and the people of other countries should



appreciate the culture of India. All these ideas of his are scattered throughout his poems, addresses, and different kinds of writings.

A poet and a thinker, he was an educationist as well, and his famous school at Shantineketan is celebrated all over the world and is visited by Indians as well as foreigners. In an address, "My School", which he delivered in America, he told much about his school. He started it at Bolepur when he was about forty. He remembered his own unhappy school life and thought that other children should not have the same kind of painful experiences; so he founded the school. It is a school full of peace and loveliness, surrounded by sal trees and far from any city. There the students learn as much from nature as from books. It trains their senses, their minds, hearts, wills, and souls. There the teachers are not only men of learning, they are also men of sympathy. They treat their students as their friends. The students learn not only to read, but also to play, to act, to do work with their hands, to sing, to paint, and to serve. No punishments are given to the students, but if a student does wrong, his case is judged by a committee of students. It has been well said of the school that it is an example of modern methods united with the ancient Indian spirit of discipline and culture. He himself once said that the principle which he followed in educating the students at

Shantineketan was: "Trust the boy and let him grow."

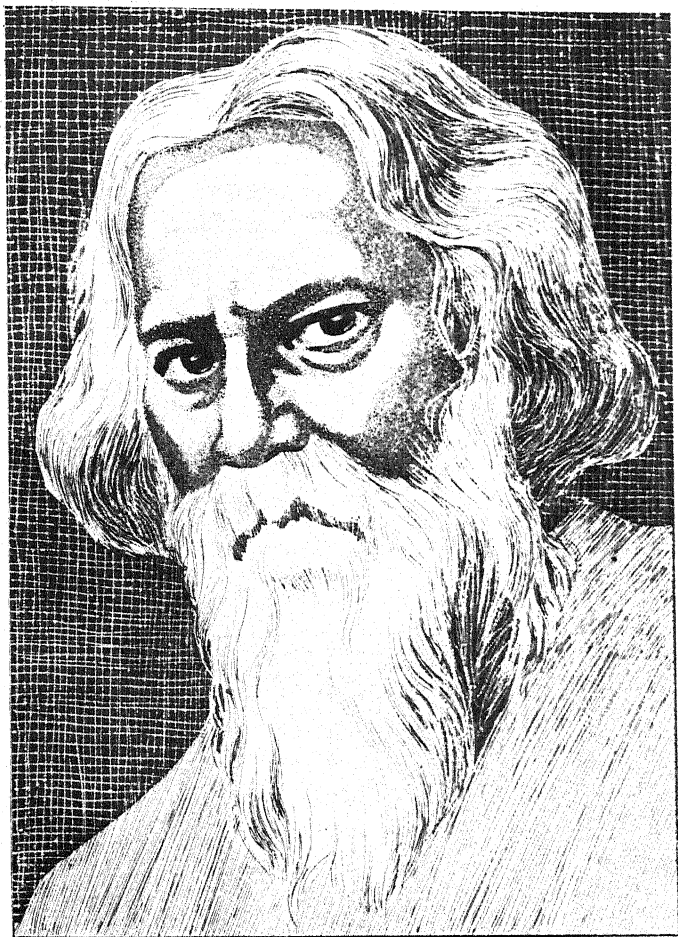
The school is, in fact, a kind of ashrama, a residential school. The daily routine of the school is very interesting indeed. At 4.30 a.m. the students get up and a group of them goes round the school singing songs so that everyone shall be awake to appreciate the beauty and calm of the morning. After cleaning their rooms they take exercise in the open air, have a bath, and meditate for about fifteen minutes. After this they proceed to the school temple where they offer their worship to God. Then the school goes on from seven to ten when there is a break for the breakfast. The school is again in session from two to five in the afternoon. The students sit under the shade of trees if the weather is good and read with a teacher. They have their sports and their games after the mid-day meal, and they tell stories to one another in the evening, and learn acting and music. Some of the senior students go to the villages nearby and conduct schools there for educating the village people. The school is like a republic and the poet was always most happy when he was there. It was said about him, "His great personality silently permeates the whole atmosphere of the school and inspires every member of the institution with the divinity and nobility of his character."

He founded Viswabharati in 1921. It is a kind

of international university and its main object is to promote better understanding between one nation and another. At Viswabharati there are gathered scholars from all over the world, who live like the members of one family, each pursuing some special subject of study. There one can meet scholars from the various countries of the world, China, Japan, Persia, Italy, and the United States of America. All these scholars study the culture of India as well as try to explain their own culture to others. This project of Rabindranath Tagore is something unique and has excited the admiration of people all over the world.

Rabindranath Tagore was born in Calcutta in 1861, his family being one of the most ancient and noble families in Bengal. He lost his mother early in his life and saw his father very seldom. The servants of the household looked after him and he studied mainly at home. He once said about his childhood:

“I was very lonely — that was the chief feature of my childhood — I was very, very lonely. I saw my father but seldom, but his presence pervaded the whole house, and was one of the deepest unseen influences all through my life. I was kept almost like a prisoner, all day long, in charge of the servants, and I used to sit day after day, in front of the window and picture to myself what was going on in the outer world. From the very



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RABINDRANATH TAGORE



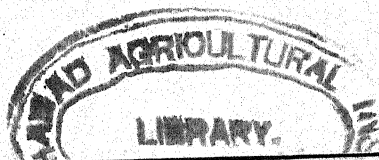
first time I can remember I was passionately fond of Nature. Oh! it used to make me mad with joy when I saw the clouds come up in the sky one by one. I felt even in those very childish days that I was surrounded with a friend, a companionship, very intense and very intimate, though I did not know how to name it. I had such an exceeding love for nature, I cannot find words to describe it to you; nature was a kind of companion, always with me, and always revealing to me some fresh beauty."

He lived in a household the members of which were very distinguished. There was a cultural atmosphere in the family. Most of the members were interested in literature and art.

He was sent to school, but he liked neither the school nor the teachers, and so he left it. He picked up what knowledge he could at home, and his passion for poetry, drama, music, and art grew.

Very early in life he began to write under the inspiration of nature and of the songs of Bengali poets like Chandidas. He had always loved nature, but he came to appreciate it all the more when his father took him on a journey to northern India and the Himalayas. The Himalayas had an uplifting influence on him and gave him new thoughts and a new vision.

His early poems were written under the name of Bhanu Singha. They were very much appre-



ciated and he was encouraged to write more. After that he continued to write and produced a great many books of poems, short stories, novels, essays, and addresses.

At the age of seventeen he went to England, and there joined the University College, London. He did not like England very much at that time, and came back without taking any degree. His father then sent him to manage his estates in Shilaida. It was there that he got to know the villages and the people of Bengal, and it was there that his genius matured.

His book of poems called *Gitanjali* was translated into English and won him the Nobel Prize. He travelled all over the world several times and delivered lectures and addresses at many cities in India. Wherever he went, people were struck with his unique personality and his unique message. He was the best ambassador of Indian Culture.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### THE TEMPLES OF SOUTH INDIA

India is rich in temples, which are not only centres of religious interest but are also things of beauty. While, on the one hand, they bear testimony to the piety of the builders and the excellent workmanship of the architects, on the other hand they throw light on the culture of our country. They show, as it were, the face of India at different times and during different periods. They are the living pictures of India and embody in them its history, its religion, its legends, its conception of art — in a word, its culture.

These temples are to be found all over India; in South India, Travancore, Mysore, Hyderabad, Western India, Baroda, Rajputana, the Punjab, the United Provinces, Gwalior, Assam, Bengal, and Orissa. Who has not heard of the temples at Nasik and Dwarka, Ujjain and Udaipur, Amritsar and Srinagar, Muttra, Badrinath and Sarnath, Puri and Gaya? But we cannot speak of all of them. We shall make only a round of some of the most important temples in South India.

First, we go to Triplicane, Madras, which has a temple dedicated to Krishna, who is represented as the Divine Charioteer. At Mylapore,



Madras, there is a temple dedicated to Siva, with which are associated the names of some well-known Tamil saints and poets. Tiruvottyur, five miles to the north of Madras, is a place of pilgrimage associated with some Tamil poets and ascetics. At one time it was a centre of learning and was visited by some Chola kings. At Tirupati we have perhaps the most sacred Vaishnava temple built on one of a group of seven hills. At Tirukkalikunram we have the best known of the hill temples along with some cave temples. It is said that this temple was patronized by Pallava and Chola monarchs, and it has been celebrated in song. Mahabalipuram contains some temples which are examples of Dravidian architecture.

Conjeevaram, which is one of the seven sacred places of India, was at one time the capital of the Pallavas. It was a religious and literary centre, and was visited by the famous Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsiang. It has many shrines, some dedicated to Siva and some to Vishnu. At Chidambaram we have a temple dedicated to Nataraja — the Dancing Lord — some parts of which are a fine example of Dravidian art. In it we find many pictures which illustrate the classical Indian art of dancing. Kumbakonam is another city full of temples, each one of which has its own story to tell. Similarly we have temples at Tanjore, which contain fine sculptures. At Trichinopoly there is a temple built on the top of a small hill.

It is reached by a fine stairway and is really very picturesque. At Srirangam there is a temple which is covered with gold plates.

More than any other city Madura is richer in temples. At one time it was the seat of many kings and the centre of a very brisk trade. It has been called the Athens of South India. The chief place of attraction is the temple of the goddess Minakshi; "Its huge towers, its corridors, its thousand-pillared hall, its wealth of sculpture all richly justify the fame of the temple." Every year a festival is celebrated there which lasts for eleven days. To attend it people come from all over India. Near the city there are many other temples of which it is not necessary to give any description.

Rameswaram is associated with the name of Shri Rama, the hero of the *Ramayana*. It is said that after slaying Ravana, Shri Rama built a temple there. This, indeed, is most magnificent, with courts and towers. This place is very sacred and is visited by Hindus from all over India.

In the district of Tinnevely are to be found many shrines, which are sacred to Siva and Vishnu. These temples have sometimes stirred up the imagination of poets who have written glowing hymns about the deities that are enshrined in them.

In the State of Travancore there are several temples, but the most sacred is the one at its

capital which is dedicated to Shri Padmanabha, the patron deity of the State. This temple is sacred not only to the inhabitants of the State, but to others as well. Every year a festival is held, which is unique in some respects. Here is a description of it: "There are two Ootsavams celebrated annually, one in the month of Minam (March) and the other in Tulam (October). The first day called Kodiyettu, or hoisting of the God's flag, and the last, the Aurat, are attended with elaborate ceremonials and these occasions draw thousands of spectators from the neighbouring villages. On the night of the ninth day, the Maharajah (of Travancore) goes in procession in front of the God for what is called vettai (Hunt) to a place a furlong outside the temple, which in the ancient days must have been thick jungle infested by wild animals. The appearance of the mock-hunt is well kept up, as perfect silence is observed till the place is reached where the Maharajah draws a bow and shoots with arrows at three cocoanuts placed there as symbolic of wild beasts. The Maharajah does the hunting as God's deputy. After this ceremony, the gods are accommodated in a separate place and are taken to their original seats only after the Aurat or bath which comes off on the next day.

"The Aurat is an imposing ceremony. After the usual rounds in the temple, the gods Padmanabha, Krishna, and Narasimha, seated in

different Vahanas (conveyances) are carried in a grand procession to be bathed in the sea, the procession being headed by the Maharajah, sword in hand, accompanied by the other male members of the royal family, his personal attendants and bodyguards. The Nayar Brigade with their arms, banners flying and band playing, the huge State elephants and horses richly caparisoned, all the Hindu officers of the State, the Harijans before the Sovereign and the Brahmins behind him, but all in front of the gods. An immense concourse of people of all castes and religions lines the roadside to view the procession — a magnificent sight possible only in a Hindu State. The procession, including the Maharajah, moves on foot all the three miles to the sea. After sunset, the images are taken to the sea and bathed. The Maharajah also bathes, and the festival closes with the return of the gods to the temple and the hauling down of the flag."

This shows how these festivals combine in them secular as well as religious interests and how they influence the lives of the people from the king downwards.

Suchindram is another place in the Travancore State, where there is a temple dedicated to Brahama, Shiva, and Vishnu. It is said that Indra, the king of gods, came himself to worship at this temple. It is also believed that in a forest near this place lived the famous sage Atri and his wife

Anasuya. Anasuya, it should be remembered, is the type of a devoted wife and is revered by people as such. Inside this temple are fine mural paintings which depict this story.

At Cape Comorin there is a temple dedicated to the goddess Uma which has inspired many poets. There is a legend associated with it which many Hindus know.

In the State of Mysore there are many places of pilgrimage. At the Mysore city itself there is a temple on a hill which is dedicated to the goddess Kali. Sringeri is a place associated with the name of Sri Sankarachariya, and with a sage named Sringa. At Sravana Belgola is a temple sacred to the Jains.

In the State of Hyderabad there are the caves and rock-cut shrines of Ajanta, the paintings in which are known all over the world. In these caves are statues of Buddha, too, and fine carvings. But the most wonderful works of art are the paintings which depict scenes from the life of Buddha. At Ellora are Buddhist Brahminical and Jain cave temples. All these add to the glory of Indian art.

These temples and shrines give us, as it were, the history of South India, and history too in the widest possible sense. They throw light on the rise and fall of the various dynasties that ruled over the Deccan. We learn of the Gangas who were patrons of Jainism and built a gigantic statue

of Gomata at Sravana Belgola. We read of the Chalukyas who were known for their valour and also for their tolerance. They built many temples and excavated several cave temples. We read also of the Hoysalas who introduced a new style of art. The Pallavas, too, patronized art and have left behind grand specimens of their architecture and sculpture, especially at Kanchi. The Cholas and the Pandyas developed the art of government as well as the trade of the country. They added to the art treasures of India as well.

The empire of Vijayanagar which lasted for more than three centuries has a glorious tale to tell. The emperors were patrons of learning and encouraged Sanskrit and Telugu literature. One of the most famous writers on the Vedas, Sayana, was a minister in the kingdom, and some of the kings themselves were scholars, authors, and poets. These emperors were also great builders. They built strong forts, works for irrigation and water supply, and grand palaces and temples which contain noble specimens of sculpture and painting. It has been said that they evolved a distinct school of architecture, which used the most difficult material with success and was served by a brilliant company of sculptors and painters.

From this we should not conclude that there is no continuity between the culture of the North and that of the South. Politics might divide

these, but religion and philosophy and art united them. We find that the people of the South worshipped almost the same gods as the people of the North. The same waves of religious enthusiasm swept over the South as the North. Sometimes the teachers from the North visited the South and sometimes those of the South went to the North. Very often theological discussions set afoot at one place spread all over the country.

In literature, too, we find the same impulses at work. It is true that the South developed its own languages, but it should also be borne in mind that it cultivated Sanskrit. The themes of literature were almost the same though their garbs were different. The *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the Puranas, and the legends of India found a fertile soil in the South and competent writers to deal with them. There was therefore literary affinity between the South and the North.

In spite of the barriers of mountains and rivers and vast distances there was always a healthy intercourse between the North and the South. This was kept up by travellers, traders, wandering Sadhus, and pilgrims.

To the cultural heritage of India that consists of glorious literature and works of art the South has made its own contribution.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE WOMEN IN INDIA

It is true that there has been some awakening among the women of India in late years; still, the position of the women in India is not very enviable. This is due to many reasons. In the first place, not even two per cent of the women are literate and even the system of education that is in vogue is not suited to them. Again, they suffer from many social disabilities. Till recently child marriages were very common and widow re-marriage was condemned. Polygamy is still prevalent among certain sections of society and the seclusion of women is still practised on a large scale. "The seclusion of women," it has been said, "denies them nature's gifts of sunshine, light and air and is helping the increase of the fell disease of tuberculosis which is fast becoming a veritable scourge in the land." Economically, too, the Indian woman is not well off. The dowry system has eaten into the vitals of our society and the passion for litigation and unnecessary expenditure on ceremonies have laid the people low. It is true that litigation is not a feminine occupation, nor are the women in India solely responsible for wasteful expenditure on ceremonial occasions,



but no one can deny that in all these matters the women of India have generally been in some ways partners. There are also some people who believe that the Hindu system which does not give women any right to property, excepting under special circumstances, is very unjust. A Hindu woman has an absolute right over *stridhan*, but after her marriage she cannot dispose of it without the consent of her husband. In this matter perhaps Muslim women are much better off.

These are some of the disabilities from which our women suffer. But in late years there has been much awakening amongst them. There is no longer any prejudice against their education, and quite a number of them are attending schools and colleges. Though the system of education as it is to be found in this country is not the best of its kind, still it has given them some notion of freedom. It is therefore no wonder that we find some women in the learned professions and a few of them practising even as lawyers. Laws have been passed against child marriage and are being enforced. The re-marriage of widows is no longer looked upon with disfavour and the woman who makes her own living as a teacher or a doctor or in some other capacity is not now a rarity. In the same way, the laws regarding inheritance are being modified, so that women should also have a share in the property of their husbands or parents. The women in India are

also taking their share in the civic life of their country, and not a few of them have turned out to be very able councillors, legislators, and public workers.

In spite of all this it is a very small proportion of women that has been benefited. But there is a strong women's movement in the country which aims at the regeneration of women. In the first place, it is said that every girl should have free and compulsory primary education. It is also held that there should be a new type of school at which the instruction should be through the mother tongue. The women of India want to make Hindustani the universal language for India and they want to have technical and industrial training. They do not want these benefits to be confined to the cities, but want them to be available for the girls and women in the villages as well. In a book which was published some time ago and to which some of the most eminent women of India contributed, some of the needs of the Indian women were discussed. It is said there that Indian women should learn how to decorate and furnish their homes; how to bring up their children; how to look after their own health as well as the health of the family; how to stop infant mortality; how to become good mothers; how to secure the right kind of education for themselves; how to promote the arts in India; how to develop the industrial life of the

country; how to promote village reconstruction; how to stop such social evils as purdah, the seclusion of women, child marriages; how to secure their legal and political rights; and how to promote the civic life in their country. All these are great ideals. Are the women working for them?

Yet it should be remembered that the condition of women has not always been so deplorable or bad as it is to-day. In the Vedic times the women of India had a very honourable and high position in Indian society. The people worshipped female deities, and it has been said that, "In those days men and women were equal partners in the great task of home and nation building, and were free to take part in every aspect of the mental and spiritual life of the race." Some women have been described as writers of some hymns, and in those days no ceremonies could be complete without their participation. A woman was looked upon as the best teacher, especially of children. Monogamy prevailed and a grown-up girl could choose a husband for herself. It was during the days of Manu that the freedom of women came to be restricted to some extent, but even in those days the women occupied an independent and honourable position in their homes. In the days of the epics the Indian woman perhaps had the best possible position. She could choose a husband for herself, she could receive education, and she

could promote the arts of the country. It is no wonder that in those days we read of women mathematicians, logicians, philosophers, poets, artists, and writers. It was, however, in the Middle Ages that such pernicious customs as polygamy and child marriage became prevalent. We have, however, seen how the women in India have been trying to shake off all these evils.

In spite of everything, the contribution of Indian women to the culture of India has not been slight. Let us first of all take poetry, in which the human spirit finds its deepest expression, and we find that women singers have enriched Indian literature. In the Vedic age we read of Ghosha, "the beloved daughter of a scholar trained as a scholar by her father" who wrote some hymns noble in sentiment and elevated in language. We have also the work of some who wrote in classical Sanskrit. Of these two are famous: Ganga Devi, a princess of Vijayanagar, and Priyamvada. In Buddhist India, too, there were women poets, who wrote poems full of devotion for their Master. These songs have been collected under the title of *Psalms of the Sisters*. In mediæval India there were two kinds of poetry — religious and romantic — and it should be remembered that most of the poetry was written in the modern Indian languages. We have therefore a large number of poems written in Tamil, Kanarese, Malayalam, Kashmiri, Marathi, Hindi, Gujrati, Bengali, and Urdu.

In Tamil there are Avvai and Andal whose poems are household words in South India. In Kanarese the most famous is Honnamma, who wrote a poem on what an ideal wife should be. In Marathi, Muktabai, Janabai, and Bahinabai wrote poems which every Marathi child knows. There are several Hindi poetesses of whom Mirabai and Rupmati are the best known. Gujrat has its own women poets and so has Bengal. Some women wrote poems in Persian and the work of at least one of them, Zeb-un-Nisa, a daughter of the Emperor Aurangzeb, has been translated into English.

Even to-day there are several women who write verses in the various languages of India. Some of them have written verses even in English. Of these Toru Dutt and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu have attained to a fame which has travelled to many countries. Toru Dutt's premature death was mourned by everybody.

In other fields, too, we come across many famous women. There is Sanjogita who married Prithvi Raj and whose story has inspired many poets and writers. Razia Begum has been famous for many, many years as a warrior and ruler. Durga Wati defended her kingdom against its enemies, and Nurjahan, Empress of India, is still remembered. We have already spoken about Mirabai whose songs are sung to this day. Chand Bibi and Ahalyabai were two great princesses, who were brave in

war as well as wise in counsel. India can never forget them.

In our own day, the three Begums of Bhopal have left behind memories of wise rule. Of these the most illustrious was Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum, who ruled her State most wisely. Pandita Ramabai and Mrs. Ramabai Ranade have left behind them records of noble social service.

From all this we find that the women of India have distinguished themselves in every field. It is to be hoped that as years pass they will take an ever-increasing share in shaping the life of India.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### EPILOGUE

We have briefly traced the development of Indian civilization at various stages. Let us now sum it up.

Of the pre-historic civilization of India we have some knowledge from the remains that have been discovered at Mohenjo-daro. By studying them we know that Indians could lay out towns with broad streets and lanes. They could make houses of burnt bricks with windows and doors; they could construct drains to keep the cities clean, and large public baths for bathers. These people loved the arts, and their seals and amulets, which they sometimes wore round their necks, are beautiful to look at, and have on them the figures of such animals as tigers, elephants, bulls, antelopes, and crocodiles. They could make pottery of the finest kind, and they could work such metals as gold and silver and copper. They made not only weapons of war but such useful things as knives and razors. Their women-folk wore bangles and necklaces, and the shopkeepers used scales and weights. They knew how to amuse themselves, how to worship, and how to dispose

of the dead. Amongst the amusements, dancing was the most popular. Their chief object of worship was the Mother Goddess, though it is probable that they worshipped other gods and goddesses as well. They generally burnt the dead, but preserved their ashes and bones in vessels.

During the Vedic period we read of the settled domestic life of the Aryans. The father protected the family as well as earned bread for it. Agriculture was mainly practised by the people, though some industries were also known. Some arts were practised too. R. C. Dutt says, "The Aryans built houses, villages, and towns, made roads and constructed boats for communication by water or for a humble kind of trade. Weaving, spinning, and plating were known, and furs, skins, and woollen fabrics were made into garments. Carpentry must have made considerable progress and dyeing was known." They knew the use of gold and silver. They gave the world the Vedas, of which the Rig Veda is the chief. These contain very lofty hymns about God, the soul, man, and some aspects of nature, such as the sky, the dawn, the rising sun, and the burning fire. They show that the ancient Aryans had a high degree of civilization. Their gifts to us have been great, indeed. They have left to us their religion, their language, their ways of writing, and their way of living. They have also given us their methods.



of government. Sir Jadunath Sarkar writes, "Aryan culture rules all India and gives to it an inner unity." According to him the gifts of the Aryans to us are six in number. In the first place, they have left to us their spirituality; that is to say, their love of the finer things of the spirit. It was a habit with them not to look at the outward form of a thing, but to look at its soul. Then these Aryans had a habit of analysing every subject carefully and of arranging its different parts in a very orderly manner. The Aryans showed also their great imagination in writing books and producing works of art. They organized human society according to what the different groups in it did. They taught us to respect women, and they built hermitages, which had such a noble influence on the life around them. From the hermits the people learnt many things. They came to know philosophy, religion, the art of peace, and the art of government from them. From them too came many noble and fine things which elevated the people.

These Aryans lived very peacefully with their neighbours. Gradually they learnt several things from them, and taught them also many things. They thus came to be known for their very tolerant attitude, and many many years later was evolved Hinduism which is a combination of many faiths.

In the domain of philosophy and science they

left their mark. As has already been said, they had a genius for arranging things in a systematic manner. So they wrote the sutras which say much in as few words as possible. Their books on medicine, philosophy, politics, grammar, law, astronomy, their spiritual poetry and literature are such as are the wonders of the world even now. Even in the field of art they produced noble works.

Many many years afterwards Buddhism came to be established in India. Buddhism too did much for India. First, it became a popular religion and came to have a great deal of appeal for the common people. Its teachings were simple and went straight to the hearts of the people. The Buddhist monks spoke and wrote in the languages of the people, and taught them by means of stories. They lived in monasteries, but the life that they led was one of discipline; that is to say, all monks made up a kind of brotherhood whose rules had to be observed by every one. Buddhism enriched the life of the people in many other ways also. The Buddhists built temples and monasteries, some of which can be seen to this day. They also established some sort of intercourse between India and several other countries.

Then the Muslims came to India, and their gifts also have been clearly set down by Sir Jadunath Sirkar. According to him, the first thing that the Muslims did was to revive the old

connections between India and other countries. There was a time when India had a navy of its own, and used to carry on trade with foreign countries. But after the decline of the Chola dynasty this came to almost nothing. The Muslims revived the navy and added to India's prosperity. They brought peace to the country, and gave it a settled government—at least for some time. They developed a new style of architecture and promoted some industries such as shawl-making, muslin weaving, and carpet-making. They made an attempt to give India a common language. They encouraged the writing of books in this language of India, for some of the kings were patrons of art and literature. They encouraged especially the writing of books on history.

The British came to India about two hundred years ago, and they brought with them several things. According to Sir Jadunath Sirkar, they have established peace in the country. He writes, "The peace so profound and spread over such extensive territories had never before been seen in India. Again they have brought India in touch with other countries of the world." During the days of the Mughals, India was connected by sea with Persia and Arabia, Zanzibar and Abyssinia, the Malaya Peninsula and Java, but now India has intercourse with all the countries of the world by sea or by land. This has made India a part of the bigger world, so that whatever

happens in India has its effects on the rest of the world. In India itself the feeling of oneness has been promoted. There is a tendency for the various communities and creeds of India to think of themselves as one, and naturally every Indian is keen on improving not only himself but his Motherland. This desire for progress has been felt in every department of life. It has influenced literature, philosophy, and arts. It has led to the spread of education of all types, and it has made people determined to rid their society and religions of all kinds of evils. It has led even to the improvement of our economic life. Knowing that India is poor, Indians are very anxious to improve the agriculture and industries of their country.

It may, however, be asked, what is the message of Indian civilization? But before we answer this question it is useful to know that in India we have all those elements which make for a high-grade civilization. The economic life of the people in the fields of industry and agriculture, though not yet well advanced, is capable of development. The political elements of civilization which are to be found in a stable government, in obedience to the State, in observance of laws, and in strength of family ties are all here. Nor are the moral elements lacking. The ideal of marriage is very high, the relations between man and woman are well regulated, the standard of morality that is

aimed at is elevating, and there is a deep religious feeling everywhere. The love of letters and science and the devotion to art have always distinguished our country. All these things fill us with hope for the future as they fill us with pride in the past.

Yet this rich heritage of ours is not merely to be kept intact; it is to be expanded and added to. It is, in fact, like a story which is not yet finished but which like some old stories is being added to by every generation of men and women. Our part in this is clear, we are not merely to listen to it and to feel delighted with it, but we are to adorn and enrich it. We should so live and work and think that to those who are to follow us we can hand on this torch with a glow that is brighter. Every one of us should therefore ask in what field he can make his contribution. Let him find out if he can add to the wealth of India, if he can increase the peace and prosperity of this country, if he can enhance the moral beauty of life, or if he can create beautiful things such as pictures or poems. Whatever is done in a spirit of service will go to the credit of our country. It will raise it in the eyes of the world and make it one of the noblest abodes of mankind.

